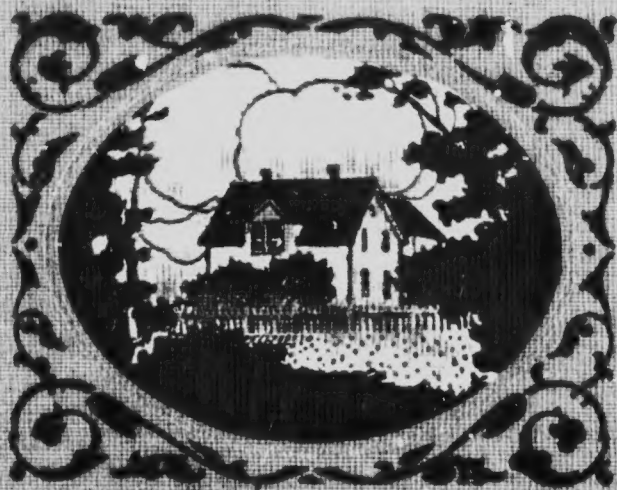
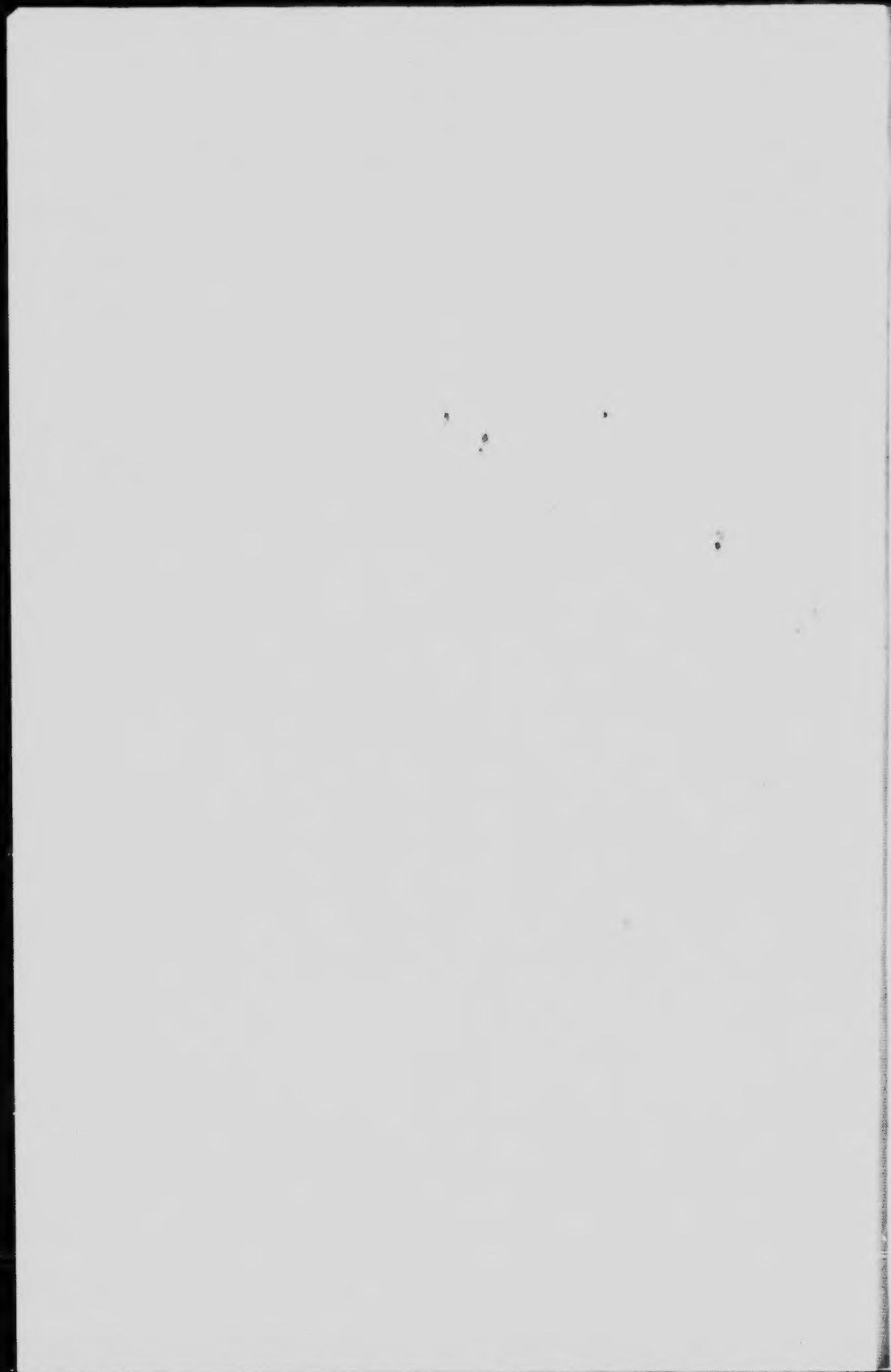


Gettysburg
April 1863



Henry J. Morgan
with Fred Weeks
from the Auction
J. M. Morgan



GABRIELLE AMETHYST

BY
F. W. MUSGRAVE



Toronto
William Briggs
1908

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1908

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F. W. MUSGRAVE.

TO
MY MOTHER

Who, although unseen, communes with me
through the infinite mystery of Love.

May she touch and bless this
effort offered with my
heart's deep
devotion.



GABRIELLE AMETHYST

CHAPTER I.

"He only is advancing in life whose heart is getting softer, whose blood warmer, whose brain quicker, whose spirit is entering into living Peace."—*Ruskin*.

"GABRIELLE is very true and unselfish," says Mrs. Argent, "but I do wish she were more like other girls. She is too thoughtless about consequences. For after all, however good a woman may be, and however pure her intentions may be, still she cannot do some things with impunity. The world will talk if a woman steps out of the sphere allotted to her."

"But after all, mother mine, does that matter—I mean the world's talk—if one is really doing good like Gabrielle Amethyst?"

"My dear boy, there are different ways of doing good, and I not only prefer the quiet and inconspicuous way, but believe it is the best."

"But I think that all that Gabrielle does is done as quietly as it is possible for it to be done."

"Then I fear she is all wrong, Harold, if she is not able to do what she is doing without being talked about and discussed, as I hear everybody is discussing her. But the truth of the matter is, that her father

allows her to do whatever she pleases. I do not mean that Gabrielle is wilful, but she is strangely determined and firm for a girl of her age. Perhaps if she had a mother it would be different. I think that every girl is at a fearful disadvantage who has never known a mother's guidance. And her father has brought her up in such a peculiar way, that it is not to be wondered at if Gabrielle is utterly unlike other girls."

These words grate on Harold's fine sensibility. His feeling of delicate chivalry for Gabrielle is wounded. He cannot bear to hear her spoken of as "talked about," as "unlike other girls," as if it were a fault in her. Surely she might be unlike other girls and yet not be an unadmirable creature for that reason. Harold knew that he understood very little about the girls of the present day, only he felt sure if they were all more like Gabrielle Amethyst this world would be a better, purer, holier place altogether.

"I like Gabrielle too much," continues Mrs. Argent, "not to feel pained when I hear her misunderstood through her indifference to public opinion. Even Mrs. Molesworth [Mrs. Molesworth is the clergyman's wife at Stapleton] thinks her quite wanting in womanly delicacy; and too bold about rushing into places where other sensitive women shrink from going."

"But does Mrs. Molesworth ever go anywhere herself with the intention of doing good? She may be a very sensitive woman, and *sensitiveness* is a very beautiful thing, but after all, if you were suffering in some dreadful place, and Mrs. Molesworth was too sensitive to go to you to take you a cup of cold water,

either real or spiritual, of what good is that sensitiveness? I must say Mrs. Molesworth always strikes me as being a most worldly woman."

"Mrs. Molesworth is a very nice woman, Harold, and keenly alive to *les bienséances*. Perhaps she is too much taken up with the affairs of this world. But there is no doubt that she is very clever."

"Yes," reflectively, "she always seems to me to hold in the cleverest way the perfect shell of Christianity, without any of the true kernel of life. Her Christianity is made up of negatives. She never dances. She never does this or that, because on the part of a clergyman's wife it is not becoming. And there she stops. She is just the sort of woman who would be confirmed for the same reason that she would be vaccinated; because public opinion has decreed it the right thing. Just as confirmation is the right thing for one's spiritual, so vaccination is for one's bodily welfare."

"Dear boy, I think you are unjust to Mrs. Molesworth. I think she is really a very good little woman in her way."

"You are right, mother, and that way is *such a little way*. I think some of us are born with larger souls than others. [He thinks of Gabrielle]. Mrs. Molesworth always seems to me to have been born with a very small spiritual being. So, perhaps, it is not her fault, but only the way she has been made. Eh, mother mine?"

"You must not be sarcastic," putting her hand out, with winning sweetness in every tone as she speaks.

Slowly Harold rises, unfolding his huge length. Bending down with something akin to reverence, he lifts the thin white hand held out to him to his lips.

They are always very gentle to each other, these two who live all alone and seem to be without a relative in the world. Harold's reverential gentleness arose greatly from the fact that his mother, as he called her (she is not his mother, but this he does not know), is blind and needs much watchful tenderness.

Mrs. Argent had her own loving reasons for being peculiarly gentle with this young giant, standing six feet five inches in his socks, who is as tender as he is big, with a heart in his great frame that would not consciously hurt a fly. He is as fearless of personal danger as it is possible for anyone to be. In one or two cases he has almost courted danger. It is true that other lives were in peril; but at the same time he had been warned that it was hopeless, and would in all probability result in his own death. But with that almost stubborn persistency that he evinced in times of peril, he had persisted, and come off victorious. These very victories had only rendered him more daring,—more foolhardy, the wise and cautious said. Again and again Harold Argent had been warned that it must end badly with him some day. "So be it," he would answer, with provoking indifference, "a fellow can only die once after all."

Harold Argent might be a fearless giant but he was not a genius. He had never been to either Oxford or Cambridge. If he had, he never would have accom-

plished anything. He would have conscientiously done his best and failed. Perhaps it was as well he never had the chance of a university education, although his mother (as he called her) groaned in secret over her inability to send him to Cambridge.

But failure of any kind must leave its lasting effect on a man, however indifferent he may be even to the subjects in which he has failed. Failure is bad for any man just beginning life.

Harold made up his mind after that conversation with his mother, that he would see Gabrielle as soon as possible, and say what he could to dissuade her from doing what caused comments to be made. He thinks that many years of friendship give him the right of speaking to his friend on this matter. But he knows, too, that there is a stronger feeling at work within him than mere friendship, moving him to do what he is inwardly trembling at the thought of doing.

He knows Gabrielle Amethyst has been holding weekly meetings for some time in the evenings, in a large room over a shop in the village. These meetings have caused everyone to lift up holy hands of disapproval, and to murmur, "Most unmaidenly!" "Most indelicate!"

Now, when Harold makes up his mind that he will try gently but firmly to dissuade his friend from her indelicate course, he also makes up his mind that in justice to this friend he will first go to one of these obnoxious meetings. Then he will be armed with fair arguments when trying to turn her from this much-to-be-regretted course.

Harold has such reverence for his mother, and for his mother's opinion, that he never doubts that as *she* disapproves of Gabrielle's course, Gabrielle must be mistaken.

Mrs. Argent is very sweet and charming in every way, but she has not yet reached the height of spiritual elevation that rises far above this world's wisdom. Her faith has not yet stretched out beyond this world's narrow, false limitations,—a world which has sent out the decree, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther"—a world lying in darkness, which says it has the light.

"Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us; we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness."

CHAPTER II.

THE room is full when Harold enters. He takes a seat by the door in a dusky corner from whence he can see and hear all that is to be seen and heard without being noticed. This small gathering is composed chiefly of women, with a sprinkling of men.

Gabrielle Amethyst is already there, waiting till they have ceased to enter and there is silence for her to address these—most of them—pale, haggard, eager faces, turned towards her with an almost hungry light in their eyes.

A very slim, youthful figure it is that stands waiting there—Gabrielle is not more than four or five and twenty, but her face looks older; it is so full of intensity at this moment that it is pale and almost drawn.

There is a pause, then calmly Gabrielle Amethyst begins in a clear, ringing voice, with a slight tremulousness in it, as of deep suppressed feeling.

"Dear friends! Dear sisters! I am just going to say a few words to you to-night on a subject that is very near to my heart. Indeed, my heart is so full of it that I could not speak on any other subject. I have just come from one who is in great mental suffering; the burden of sin is so heavy upon her that she cannot rise under the weight of it. She keeps quoting this verse in her black despair,—'And shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.'

"Now, in the Revised Version the words are translated—'And they that have done ill unto the resurrection of *judgment*.' A vast difference, it seems to me, between 'judgment' and 'damnation.' All that have done evil shall be judged with just judgment and punished accordingly. But I hold that here on earth it is never too late to receive full, free pardon and peace. Is it not said—'And you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses'?"

"Friends! I can never forget the look of awful despair when these words were uttered: 'I was predestined to *damnation*. There is no hope for me. It is too late now. I cannot even pray.'

"Oh, do not deceive yourselves! And I entreat you, do not be deceived by any man, even though he should call himself a minister of God. Read your Bible—study it, and you will be all taught of God. I see nowhere in my Bible that any of us are *predestined* to eternal damnation.

"God is a just God. Above all He is a God of love—such infinite love! Oh, how well I know it. I have drunk so deeply of that love—and have always found it flowing out to me so freely! And what have I ever done that He should give me so freely of His love!

"Take this verse on predestination. Take any verse in which predestination is mentioned; and you will see that it all comes to *this*—that God has predestined some of His children to great glory.

“‘For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be ‘he first-born among many brethren.’

“‘Moreover, whom he did predestinate them he also called, and whom he called them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified.’

“That God has predestined some of us to *great glory* is plainly written in His Word. Again and again we read it. Listen to this verse:

“‘Having predestined us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself according to the good pleasure of his will.’ ‘To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.’ These verses show clearly that God did predestinate some of His children to great special glory. To His first-born he gave the first-fruits of salvation.

“St. Paul speaks to the Hebrews of ‘The general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven.’

“But because a father specially honors his first-born and predestinates him, before he is even born, to great glory, does that show that he has predestinated any of His children to eternal damnation? Dear friends, perhaps of all verses in the Bible this comforts and strengthens me most:

“‘That in the dispensation of the fulness of time he might gather together in one *all* things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him.’ Yes, I say it boldly. I do believe that in the fulness of times *all*, *all* will be gathered together in Christ.

"That our God, who is a God of infinite love and tenderness, as well as a just God, should have predestined *any* of His children to *eternal* damnation, is to me an impossible thing. I could not believe *that* and believe Him to be a God of love, which I do believe and *know* Him to be.

"There are many things that we cannot understand, that we are not meant to understand. For if we could now understand all that God means, then where would be our faith? 'Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen.' But oh, there is one thing we are meant to understand, and that is the Father's love for us. Ah, if we would only understand that; if we were only taught that first, before we were taught a hundred creeds! If we were only taught the depth and breadth and height of that love before we were taught long catechisms.

"I do believe in predestination, but not in the generally accepted belief that God has predestined some to everlasting joy, and that some who have not even heard of Christ are doomed to everlasting torment.

"Does that seem like justice? Even to our darkened understanding, does that seem like the loving Father that, through Christ, He has declared Himself to be?

"God chose specially to reveal Himself to a chosen people, for it is said, 'But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his glorious light.'

"Now, perhaps at first sight, looking at it with our poor, human, bedarkened eyes, it does seem almost an

unjust thing for a Creator to have created only some of us to special glory. For these verses show that He did: '*Of his own will begat* he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.' And again—'These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb.' And—

"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of *his own will*.' Yes, in all our evil hearts the question is sure to arise: Why is this? Why should God have specially chosen some of His children to great glory? And we can only answer *that* question with this declaration: God has not yet revealed all His plans to us, any more than an earth'y father explains all his intentions to his children. This is faith, to trust without understanding. And oh, let us watch against that evil spirit of rebellion that murmured against the good man of the house, a spirit of rebellion that is pleased to rebel at what it calls the Almighty's injustice.

"It has always seemed to me"—Gabrielle's face glows with intense earnestness—"that the chosen people, the first-fruits, are those on whom the light of Christ has been shed. Those that have been called out of darkness into His marvellous light. And great will be their responsibility!

"And that servant which knew his Lord's wish and prepared not, neither *did according to his will*, shall be beaten with many stripes.'

"But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.'

"The heathen, who have never been called out of darkness into His marvellous light, will be beaten with very few stripes.

"For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, not having the law, are a law unto themselves.'

"Which show the works of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.'

"I do believe that a man like Buddha, not having the law, is a law unto himself. Not knowing the true God, they worship an unknown God, and get nearer to the spirit of the true God very often than those who have been directly taught the true God. Do you remember what Paul said to the men of Athens when he passed by and saw the inscription on their altar 'To the unknown God'?

"Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.'

"There is born in us—whether we be Christian or heathen—that which yearns after something pure and great and all-powerful. I believe it is the relation, the affinity of spirit for spirit. Just as the child here yearns after and turns to its mother before it can reason, so there is something in us—that spiritual part of us—that often unconsciously yearns after the Spiritual Father. The immortal spark within us gropes feebly after the Great Immortal! That immortal part of us, never even having heard of the Great Spirit of all spirits, feels after and *recognizes*

its spirit's necessity for some Greater Spirit to worship, to love. Thus it worships its unknown God. Is not that a beautiful thought?" And Gabrielle's face shone with a spiritual light.

"The Gentiles which follow not after righteousness have attained to righteousness which is of faith.' Does that not show that they were worshipping *the true God* all the time, though ignorantly? Which of us would dare to say or think that in that sincere groping after a god, they do not touch the true God, their Father? If knowing not the true Bread of Life, in the extremity of soul-hunger, they feed their souls on some bread, although not *the* Bread of Life, will they be punished? 'These having not the law are a law unto themselves.'

"Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts.'

"Their conscience, then, will be the law by which they will be judged and punished. Never could I entertain the idea even for a moment that those whom we call unbelievers will be 'cast out into that outer darkness where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

"Our Saviour said that, speaking of the *children of the Kingdom*.

"When the Roman centurion came to Him with the confidence of a little child, beseeching Him to 'speak the word only and my servant shall be healed, Jesus marvelled, and said to them which followed: Verily I say unto you, I have not found *so great faith, no not in Israel*.'

"Now, this man was a Roman officer, yet Jesus declares he finds more faith in him than in all Israel. He had never been baptised nor confirmed. He was not what we would call a Christian. He had had no Christian advantages. And yet the Saviour, seeing his heart, declares clearly that he has great faith. We can see he has great love and tenderness for his servant.

"'But speak the word only and my servant shall be healed.'

"'And Jesus answered: Go thy way, and as thou *hast believed* so be it done unto thee.'

"Oh, for that childlike faith that can say simply, believingly, from the bottom of the heart:

"'But speak the word only and *thy* servant shall be healed.' Oh, my friends, I entreat you!" Gabrielle's face grew pale from the intensity of her earnestness.

"Look up! Break away from those old bonds—fetters of belief—cast them from you. Be no longer as slaves chained down with false, cruel chains—chains of Predestination and Eternal Damnation! Chains which bind the soul to earth and which keep it from seeing God—as God the Father of boundless love! Look up, as freed men and women—look up and know your God. Look into His face, and feel it shine upon you with the mystery of divine tenderness, and hear Him say, 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the WORLD through him might be saved.'

"It is thus in the new translation:

"'For God sent not his Son into the world to *judge* the world, but that the world should be saved through him. He that believeth on him is not judged; he that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God.'

"'And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil.'

"This is the judgment, then, that the light came to us, but we loved darkness rather than light. And if we go on preferring this darkness, then we shall be beaten with *many* stripes. For we have no excuse. The light has come to us. We shall be beaten with many stripes in *this world*, and in the world to come. That there is a place of punishment hereafter which we call Hell, or Gehenna, is only too true. But that that place of punishment is often *here* on earth, few seem to believe. Yet even within our own experience do we not often see sin and crime meet their full meed of punishment and suffering? We shall be punished here on earth till, like the prodigal son, we arise and go to our Father.

"If here on earth we do not arise and go to our Father, then the punishment will be in the other world. There we shall be punished and purified till we do arise and go to our Father. For He is a God of the dead as well as of the living. Thank God for these words:

"'For to this end Christ both died and rose re-

vived, that he might be Lord both of the *dead and living.*'

"And—'As I live, saith the Lord, *every* knee shall bow to me, and *every* tongue shall confess to God.'

"If we are to believe simply as a little trusting child, can we believe otherwise than that in God's own time He will bring us all to Him?

"In different ways it may be, and through *much* suffering if we persist in rebelling against a loving Father. But still that we shall in time all reach Him I do believe.

"'God dealeth with you as with *sons*. For w' t son is he whom the Father chastiseth not?'

"'Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live.'

"Oh, the depth of comfort that there *is* in that one verse to me. My humanity grasps and takes in that likening of the father of our flesh to the Father of spirits, and grasping that likeness it rests on it."

Gabrielle's whole being seemed aflame with a spiritual fire that not only held her listeners absolutely, but burned into their hearts. Something like the shadow of a sob quivered in her voice as she went on:

"Nothing could make me believe we are not all the children of our Heavenly Father! Yea, all. I say it in all humility. I believe we are all the children of the Father of all, who is over all. Some of us are still disobedient children that have not left the husks like the prodigal son. If the father of our flesh

would not condemn us to eternal damnation, then think you that our Heavenly Father, who is boundless love, will be less tender? Yea, even to the most rebellious of His sons! Yea, even to those who die with the husks in their mouths. He waits that He may be gracious.

"I say this for the comfort of those who have known the blackness of despair, not on their own account, but on account of some loved one whom they believe lost forever! 'Not willing that *any* should perish.'

"Is God's love all-powerful or not?

"I wonder why none of us will believe simply *as little children?*

"'For God hath concluded them *all* in unbelief that he might have mercy upon *all*.'

"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out.'

"My knowledge of God has not made me see Him in the light of a relentless God. Like the prodigal's father, He does leave us with our husks for a time. But I believe sooner or later the thought of Him—of His love—must draw us back into His arms. 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw *all* men unto me.' Have I not His sanction for saying *my* knowledge of Him? For is it not said:

"'Let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone that loveth is born of God, and *knoweth* God.'

"I know that I love you! I know that my heart

yearns over you *all*. I know that I would give my life for you!"

There was a soft murmur of awed assent, and a low sob here and there from some bent form among the audience.

" 'Greater love hath no man than *this*, that a man lay down his life for his friends.'

"Has *He* not laid down His life for you?

"Does He not love you and yearn over you *all* with a far greater and intenser love than mine for you?

"Would I doom one of you, vile as I know some of you to be," Gabrielle's voice quivered with suppressed feeling, "to eternal damnation?"

"No, the viler I know you to be, the more my heart yearns over you. Then think you that our Father's love is less tender or forbearing or long-suffering than mine?

"*In that love which I bear to you I recognize my God!*

"And I declare, 'I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

"No! no power shall separate us from that love! Not even the power of sin. Evil *will not* prevail over good. 'But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and earth, and some to honor and some to dishonor.'

"The prodigal was a vessel of dishonor for some time. But he was his father's son all the same. And

we are all in 'God's Great House.' Although so many of us have to be purged and made vessels of honor. 'If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work.'

"It only remains with us, that we leave our husks, and we shall be made vessels of honor. Many of us here know what that purging means. We know what it means to have passed through hell flames here on earth. Too well we know the meaning of having been 'cast into that outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth!' Don't you think David knew the meaning of it when he cried, 'My soul is among lions, and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.'

"'For my days are consumed like smoke and my bones are burned as an hearth.'

"Before I close, let me add one word of entreaty to you all which I beg you to ponder earnestly. It is said, 'They limited the Holy One of Israel.' Let us be careful lest in our presumption *we* limit the 'Holy One of Israel.'

"We cannot tell just how those will be punished who die in their sins, or how long they will be punished. But that they fall into the hands of a loving Father, 'not willing that *any* should perish,' let none of us doubt. And let us be slow to think even that such a one has died in his or her sins. For the thief on the Cross is held up to us to show us that we are not to judge by appearances, and that one

true spark of faith in the heart will take us straight to Paradise. Oh, 'that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and *revelation in the knowledge of Him.*' Let me say this to help and comfort those who are only feeling the burden of sin now, that that knowledge of sin is the Spirit's first quickening in us. You are beginning now to live, and soon you will awake to *the New Life.* I believe that disbelief far oftener springs from despair than from pure rebellion.

"But fear not! Trust the loving Father and keep these words in your heart, 'Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, the *free gift came upon all men* unto justification of life.'*"*

CHAPTER III.

THERE is a little movement among a group of girls sitting to the left of Gabrielle. One of the girls rises and, moving swiftly forward, almost throws herself at Gabrielle's feet. "I see it all now," she cries. "I see it all as I never before saw it! Oh, my dear lady, may the God you love so dearly bless you and make you happy and give you peace, for there is something like peace in my heart to-night that has never been there before."

There is one great, low sob, like the sudden inward breaking of an already half-broken heart.

Harold gets up softly and goes out. It is a glorious night. The moon is shining down with a clear, tranquil light. The shadows of the trees are beautiful in this silver blue light. On and on Harold walks in a restless way, murmuring to himself, "Unworthy, unworthy to touch the hem of her garment even. Great God, who could listen to those words of heartfelt earnestness and not be moved? Who could look on the spiritual glow in that face and not be stirred to one's depths? My God, I have heard Thee set forth to-night as never before. Fool that I was to think she could do anything that would not be the work of an angel. And I went there with the intention of dissuading her from doing her Father's work."

He smiles scornfully to himself as he thinks now of his motive in going to that meeting. And then he

prays to be forgiven for presumptuous sin for having dared to judge her—who was so plainly doing Christ's work—in her earnest endeavor to bring comfort to the broken-hearted.

Presently Harold sits down on a large rock and covers his face with his hands. This young giant sits there humbled and subdued as a little child. Something like a shiver passes through his strong frame. Let us leave him here with his strong emotion, that is shaking him as the wind shakes the leaves on the trees. He is beginning to pass through his deep waters of anguish. His spirit is overwhelmed within him. He has always from a boy admired Gabrielle Amethyst, and liked her with what he thought were very brotherly feelings.

Harold Argent is a simple fellow, and perhaps a little dense withal. Till this moment he was quite unconscious of the true feeling he had for Gabrielle. Perhaps this seeing and knowing her now, as he had never before seen or known her, awakes in him a deeper knowledge, so that it is impossible for him now not to recognize the power and intensity of his feeling for her. He tells himself sadly, hopelessly that it will never die—this true, strong love for Gabrielle. For he knows her well enough to feel all the utter hopelessness of this love for her. By the light of this love, too, he recognizes something of his own determined, unswerving nature. So his love for Gabrielle at this moment is only anguish to him, for beside it rises up all his own unworthiness.

Perhaps love never hurts us so much as when it

makes us feel all our own utter unworthiness. And the deeper and purer that love is, the more keenly the thought of all that unworthiness bruises us.

Is there anything in this life more purifying, more elevating, than a true, holy love for some beautiful character?

To have once loved some spiritually noble character seems to wash out of us all possibility of loving one of smaller spiritual stature.

The heart refuses to *descend* in the scale of love. It may be mistaken. It may find out some day that what it deemed a pearl is only the veriest colored glass. But once having loved a pearl, it can only give its highest and best in feeling to a pearl.

So Harold felt that the very depth and purity of his love brought with it into his life a great hopelessness. For he dared not hope that his love would meet with any return.

CHAPTER IV.

HAROLD is shown into a small room, whose chief peculiarity lies in the quantities of ferns in every direction. Harold knows this room well, for his mother always calls it "Gabrielle's fern dell." Wherever a fern can be placed in that room there is one. Delicate maiden-hair ferns tremble in the breeze. Lovely gold and silver ferns from Jamaica wave softly their beautiful fronds. In great tubs there are tree ferns, and large ferns of all kinds in every corner of the room. Very cool and inviting this fernery looks to anyone coming in from the heat and glare outside. Everything in this room appeals to Harold. Everything seems to have been touched and sanctified by Gabrielle's presence.

Gabrielle Amethyst is writing in the corner of the room, almost hidden behind a huge fern. She rises instantly on Harold's entrance and comes forward with genuine pleasure in her face.

"I am afraid I am interrupting your writing," Harold says, not taking the chair she has offered him.

"Oh, no, not at all! I am only writing because I had nothing else to do."

"What a comfortable person it is that has nothing to do sometimes." He smiles down from his great height.

"I am so glad you came. I had just been thinking about you and your mother. I have not seen her for many weeks."

And Gabrielle looks, as she sinks back in the low armchair, as if she meant to give herself up to this moment of restful enjoyment.

Harold takes another armchair, and lazily stretches out his huge length and looks the picture of calm content, half surrounded by ferns and with Gabrielle opposite to him. Harold is always calm, the indolent calm of great strength. It is only weakness that is restless and exhibits no settled repose.

Beauty is so much a matter of opinion that I will not say whether I think Gabrielle beautiful or not. I will simply try to describe her as faithfully as I can and leave you to your own decision. Her face defies criticism for this reason, its very imperfections are charming. The slight droop about the corners of the mouth, which in itself is not beautiful, still gives a soft, wistful, almost pathetic expression to the whole face. That droop appeals straight to your heart, although you might be unconscious for some time as to what it was that did appeal to you so strangely.

You might go so far and pronounce it not a pretty face, and so far as mere regularity of outline went, it was not, for it was not perfect in *contour*. And yet while you were pronouncing the face too short, at that moment some expression would flash into it, lighting it up with a spiritual radiance that was irresistible.

There could not be two opinions about Gabrielle's eyes, though in color they were as truly navy blue as eyes could be, with lashes long and black. But the varying lights and shades which came into them at

times moved the heart within you, and made you long to gaze into the depths of those thoughtful and sometimes very sad eyes. As this sadness would deepen, you would marvel at the intensity of feeling which must be there producing it, and as you gazed you saw nothing but those beautiful eyes full of expressive pain.

In Gabrielle's manner there was perfect repose, mixed with a grave gentleness. Sometimes that repose grew till she seemed to have wandered away in spirit. But in all that calm there was a feelingness that seemed to reach out and touch your innermost life. It seemed something more than mere sympathy, because she not only had the power of divining what you felt, the power likewise of suffering with your suffering, but she drew hearts to her, and those hearts learned to rest upon her for help, almost for strength.

"I was at your meeting last night," Harold says presently, in his direct way. There is never any beating about the bush with this young giant, all he says or does is of the most direct nature. Gabrielle only raises her eyes and looks at him with a trifle more thoughtfulness, perhaps. "I have a confession to make, Miss Amethyst."

"And why a confession to me?" and there is a shadow of coldness in her tone.

"Because I went to your meeting with the intention of priming and loading myself with reasons to try to dissuade you from doing what you have been doing all winter."

"Oh," she says, almost wearily. "But won't you spare me to-day? I am very tired."

"I have come to tell you now, Miss Amethyst, that I, for one, thank you for what you said last night. This is all my confession." But his voice trembles a little. Somehow Gabrielle manages to screen her face from him at this moment. She only stoops and picks off slowly a dead frond from a gold fern in a pot by her side. Then, in silence, Gabrielle looks up at Harold, and that thoughtful look of pain creeps into her face. And for a second or two she has gone from him.

"Miss Amethyst, I know I am a stupid, rough sort of fellow, but—" pausing—"I can never be just the same as I was before last night. You have put thoughts into me—and"—he nearly said feelings—"and they will never go from me again, I can say that certainly. Is there anything you will let me do for you?"

"You have done much already for me," Gabrielle answers slowly. "You have helped me in a way you little dream of."

Harold's face shows his pleasure at this speech, and a little selfish hope begins to steal into his heart, which he speedily crushes.

"Mrs. Molesworth was here just before you came in, and she said all she could to persuade me to cease what I am doing; what I have been doing for months—speaking to those poor things as I spoke last night, and trying to comfort them in different ways. She says that nursing them and making clothes for them is not stepping out of my sphere, but to preach to them as I do is bold and unmaidenly, and can never

do any good. Why should I imagine I can do more good in that way than Mr. Molesworth? They can always hear him."

"I believe she is jealous that your influence is greater in that direction than her husband's," affirms Harold, in his short, decisive way.

"Ah, no!" smiles Gabrielle, "she really thinks it is not maidenly on my part."

"That may be, but I do believe the little woman's soul is vexed within her because those people go to hear you that never go to hear the Rev. Pemberton Molesworth! I have seen a wonderful amount of bitterness among men like the Rev. Pemberton Molesworth, and it is very strange how often they get a wife who is simply their echo."

"Yes, it is true in some instances, but I do know *one* man who is as utterly free from all that pettiness and miserable egotism as a man can be. He drove miles one night to bring a Roman Catholic priest to a poor dying soul who was longing for spiritual comfort from one of his own persuasion. No one could know that man and not see that he held the pearl of great price in all its most glowing and beautiful brightness. Surely his faith far exceeded the faith of Molesworth and Ashmeed?" The Rev. Warburton Ashmeed was a High Church priest in a neighboring parish.

"Oh, Mr. Argent," Gabrielle goes on, earnestly, "why should there be so much jealousy and bitterness among those calling themselves Christians?"

"Ah, why, indeed?"

"Why do we not all feel that we are all working

in the Master's vineyard? All work in different directions according to our several abilities and gifts, but under the same King. Do you know, I am sure Mrs. Molesworth would rather I did nothing *at all* for my Lord, than do it in this way."

"You did not promise her anything, then?"

"No, I could not promise; certainly not what she wanted," Gabrielle answers very gently, "I think what distressed me most was Mr. Molesworth saying that your mother utterly disapproved of my proceeding. Does she, Mr. Argent?"

"My mother has never heard you. She has never been to any of your meetings. She really knows nothing about it." And for once Harold answers a little evasively, and not in his usual direct manner. "Let me say this, I do not think anyone could hear you and not be convinced that what you were doing was done in single-heartedness, and that good, only good, could be the result."

"Thank you, oh, thank you so much for saying this. It is not that I have any doubt myself. I have no doubt as to the needfulness of what I am doing. Only when everyone is against one, then you see one is afraid of doing harm in a different way. I am sure you understand?"

"Yes, I do understand; but if I were you, when I thought everyone was against me, and I had any doubt about its not being purely right I would just think of what that poor girl said last night about the peace you had poured into her heart. I would just think of that."

Harold rises to go as he speaks.

"I will think of it. Ah, if you only knew what I know! If you only saw something of the sufferings of those struggling creatures, you would think I was very faithless to doubt or think of what Mrs. Molesworth says. Thank you for coming."

"Rather thank you for having strengthened one of the weak."

Gabrielle Amethyst smiles, a smile in which there is no shade of sadness.

Harold carries that smile with him as he goes out.

CHAPTER V.

GABRIELLE AMETHYST had been educated in many respects very strangely and quite differently from other children. Her mother had died when she was only a few days old. Her father had had the entire control of her, and he brought her up to be in utter ignorance, at seven, of many things that other children knew when they were four. She had never been away from her father till the age of seven; had scarcely ever seen anyone besides her father, her nurse, another servant, and occasionally her step-brother. Death in all its awful meaning was an unknown thing to her. She had been kept in perfect ignorance of the words "good" and "evil." The meaning of those words "good" and "suffering," in all their wide significance, had never dawned upon her little spirit till she was eight years old. That there was a Supreme Being over all, whom we call "God," was an unheard-of mystery to her. It was a daring experiment of Mr. Amethyst's, the bringing up of this little soul in this strange and wholly unusual way. His experiment had had some glorious results, but it had correspondingly painful ones. I doubt whether Gabrielle Amethyst ever knew what it was to have a perfectly happy moment after she was seven; by happy, I mean that light-hearted happiness that is meant for childhood. It was not that Gabrielle was unhappy; far from it. It was only that she was intensely thoughtful. She was so

naturally, but this strange bringing-up of hers had gone to foster this thoughtfulness and increase it ten thousand fold.

She never really enjoyed anything as other girls enjoyed it, because she was always analyzing her feelings, and philosophizing just where another would have yielded herself up utterly to the moment of enjoyment. But Gabrielle never did this; it was as if, from that moment of waking consciousness, she had taken the rudder of her feelings with a firm hold, and never let it go to be carried away by the drift of any waves of emotion. Mr. Amethyst had preserved a fresh, pure mind to work upon and cultivate. He had thought to make an unusually thoughtful woman out of this child of his; but he had not in his calculation fathomed the depths of her character.

Is it not always so? Do any human calculations ever come out just as human wisdom expects? Do any of us have to live very long to learn this lesson?

There were years in Mr. Amethyst's life that he never could forget, and never could look back upon without a shudder—years of long, dismal apprehension for the life of his child.

It was as if the brain, unaccustomed to exert itself in any way, unaccustomed to a gradual strengthening by use, set itself to work with a force that was too much for the child's strength, both mental and physical. She grasped things mentally with an extraordinary avidity. Once the stream of knowledge was opened to her, she drank at that stream thirstily, but her thirst never seemed quenched. The more she

drank, the more her thirst seemed to increase. Then the father almost trembled for his child's reason, and he bitterly accused himself of having made his child's life a misery to her. He had wished to teach her to look upon life seriously, and he had succeeded, but his success was so great that he trembled at his own work.

"Papa," she would say, giving utterance to some thought like this: "I feel as if all the sins of the world were upon me. The thought of sin makes me grow faint! Oh, why is it all like this, I wonder?"

No one ever knew how much, or how keenly, Gabrielle suffered when the knowledge of some new sin burst upon her, or the horror of some great crime struck her. Her spirit turned away nauseated at the sight of some loathesome sin. To a pure, fresh mind like Gabrielle's, the very thought of evil acts like a moral emetic. Brought up as she had been, it all came to her like a terrible revelation.

How could it be otherwise with the woman when as a child she had drunk in everything with such painful interest. When as a child of ten her father had tried to explain certain mysteries in nature, she took it all in with deep earnestness.

When it had come to that mystery of mysteries—death—something like awe had held her.

"Papa," she whispered, "shall I really cease to be some day on this earth?" Her father had tried to explain, but he stopped suddenly as a look of terror crept into every line of her face.

"Oh, papa, must you?" Her voice had died away;

she had fallen on her father's breast almost fainting from fear, as that first thought of death's taking from her some loved one struck her.

The thought had come to her then in all its awful meaning of desolation.

"Papa," she had said some time after, "how is it that everyone lives as if they meant to live forever? Do people really believe that they have to die? Or do they just never think about it? Do you know, I wonder whether each one in thinking of death with regard to himself does not doubt the possibility of death touching him. Harold told me the other day he felt as if it was impossible for him to die. I cannot understand how some day will be no day for me here on earth. I cannot take in how some night will be my first night in the grave; that those who love me will be weeping over me. Yes, I believe most of us doubt it with regard to ourselves. There is always a lurking hope in the bottom of every heart, I believe, 'that it won't be so with me.' And perhaps it will be so, perhaps when death comes to us it will not seem death as we see it now and believe it to be. Perhaps it will be only to us a beautiful departing, a going forth unto realms of spiritual delight. But death, with regard to our dear ones, does not seem to me anything but a bitter tearing away of loved one from loved one. My father, oh, my father!"

Gabrielle was on her knees beside her father, tears raining silently from her eyes.

"My child," her father had said, bending over her, "what have I done! I have made you unhappy.

Thought has now become a scourge to torture you. I am powerless now to restrain the rapid growth of this plant of my own fostering."

"But, papa, why should you wish me to be otherwise? Would you wish me not to think of these things? Are they not the real things? What is more real in life than suffering and death? Ah, no, darling, you should not wish me to be less thinking than I am. I thank you for having trained me to look at life seriously."

"Yes, my child, I would have you look at life seriously, but I would not have you dwell upon some things with such intensity that you become unhappy and morbid. Do you not understand me, little one?"

"But, papa, how can I stop thinking?" A simple question this, but not so easily answered.

"You cannot stop thought, but you can try to direct your thoughts into different channels. I would like you to think of happy subjects as well."

Gabrielle sighed. She felt how almost impossible that would be, after having been developed, so to speak, only in an atmosphere of solemn thought. Gabrielle never forgot any expressed wish of her father's, and she did make an effort, and that effort did her great ultimate good. And later on these words came to her and filled her with a holy comfort and rest:

"Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness."

To say that Gabrielle Amethyst was unselfish would

not convey a correct idea of her character—it was an utter forgetfulness of self. She seemed to have merged her whole being into the well-being of her father, who seemed unconscious of this self-renunciation for his sake on the part of his daughter. He only looked upon it as the beautiful dutifulness of a loving child. He accepted calmly as a matter of course all this wealth of love which Gabrielle lavished upon him. All men are inclined (even fathers) to appropriate as their right the great devotional love of some woman. Mr. Amethyst knew he loved his daughter as he loved no other human creature on earth, so he took all her loving tenderness, all her devotion, simply as his due. Outsiders did not always think him as considerate of his daughter as he ought to be, and they even used the hard word “selfish”; but he was not really selfish, he was only so much wrapped up in one idea sometimes that there was no room for the entrance of any other. No one would have scouted that suggestion of selfishness with warmer indignation than Gabrielle herself.

“My father is the perfection of a father,” she once said, proudly, to Harold. “He is wisdom and tenderness combined. He gives me the heart of a mother with the brain of a father. He is father, mother, brother and sister all in one to me.”

Yet frequently at night, when other girls had been asleep for hours, probably, Gabrielle was still looking out for him and reading aloud the meaning of words to throw light on an obscure passage in some Greek or Hebrew book. For Mr. Amethyst was a

scholar, with all a scholar's keen desire for knowledge. He was always adding to his already extensive fund some bit of information, some piece of truth, buried in a language little known. He was not a practical man and never would be, he was too much of a book-worm for that, and he was altogether too imaginative. He would never be what the world calls a successful man, for he was too sensitively made to push himself forward, and his intense conscientiousness was in his way. If he agreed with a man on ninety-nine points and differed on the one hundredth, he would hammer away conscientiously on that hundredth point on which they differed, so that it might be clearly understood by his friend that he did not agree with him. His trumpet must give no uncertain sound! And if it was a matter on which, by remaining silent, there was any chance of his gaining some worldly advantage, then the more firmly did he hammer away on the head of this hundredth point of difference.

Now, there are men quite contented to know that you differ from them, and to forget that difference, and let it have no effect on their treatment of you, so long as you are silent on the subject. But these same men will instantly rise in arms if you dare assert boldly that difference. They then seem to look upon this bold assertion in the light of a defiance, and this is too much for human littleness. Human littleness will not be defied in this way. In this bigoted world you must not be self-assertive in any way if you would be successful. If you cannot think like other men, then be silent or else bid good-bye to what

the world *calls* success. And the sooner you make friends with failure the better. You must show a wholesome fear of the powers which be—ecclesiastical or otherwise—or expect to be left out in the cold. Truly does Farrar speak, when he says:

“Nothing is less like the ordinary character of man than to make allowance for difference of opinion in matters of religion.”

And if it is so in matters of religion—if there human nature is still so narrow and hard—what will it be in matters of worldly differing?

So, as Mr. Amethyst was what the world calls a very peculiar man, who held opinions different from everyone almost, and as he always openly ventilated his opinions, it was not to be wondered at that he was neither successful nor possessed of much of this world's wealth.

Gabrielle and her father lived together in a small, but very cosy house. Mr. Amethyst constantly preached in the dissenting chapels, but, as a rule, he preached in the open air, because some of the Dissenters, even, were a little suspicious of his religious views. He had belonged to, or rather had been brought up in, the Church of England, but he had long since left that Church; to put it in his way—that Church had long ago left him. Although he was very tolerant to almost all the religious sects, he was decidedly inclined to be intolerant with regard to the very High Church party and the Ritualists. He could not believe them quite sincere. And here came in a strange thing. On that point the father and daughter could not agree.

Although Gabrielle had been brought up so entirely by her father, and believed in him so thoroughly, still there were points on which they did not see alike, and this was one of them. Not that Gabrielle was either High Church or Ritualistic—she was neither. But she believed them to be perfectly sincere, although she neither believed or saw as they did. But she acknowledged the good they had done; her father could never acknowledge it, because he could never believe it.

But the father was never intolerant to his daughter for holding different views. On the contrary, he always showed the tenderest respect for the more liberal opinion held by his daughter. Albeit, it puzzled him not a little sometimes.

CHAPTER VI.

ALWAYS serene, always cheerful, you really could scarcely tell that Mrs. Argent was blind. See her moving about her little domain. Of course everything is arranged for her comfort and convenience. She is devoted to her flowers, and there is something touching in seeing her among them in her little garden bending over them with loving care. Mrs. Argent is with her flowers now when the gate opens and Gabrielle Amethyst enters. Instantly the old lady goes forward to meet her; well she knows that light step.

"My child," she says, taking her into her arms, "You have quite deserted the old lady."

"Don't talk of desertion, little mother!" Gabrielle had fallen into the habit of calling her "mother" when quite a little girl, from hearing Harold call her so. "I have been very busy lately. Now I want a rest. I have come to you. It is so delicious to be with you again in this hallowed little spot. I wonder," she goes on, "that you are so fond of flowers when their chief beauty is lost to you."

"No, dear," very gently, "not their *chief* beauty. A beauty enjoyed by the physical eye is lost upon me, but is there not a more potent beauty still which is not lost, and never is enjoyed by the physical eye? You ought to know this, if any one does know it here. I do not think your chief beauty is lost upon

me, although I cannot see your face or any of your physical sweetness. Do not my flowers breathe out their souls to me in an invisible sweetness? Do I not drink in their fragrance every morning and evening? In the same way do I not feel your sweet love shed upon me? Don't you breathe out on me your soul's perfume? Perhaps I am more sensitively alive to that perfume than if I was able to enjoy the material beauty."

"Oh, mother, I don't know where my spiritual perfume is!"

"No, my child, that is true, *you* cannot tell, but *I* can feel it. You cannot show me where the unseen fragrance of my flowers exists, but I feel it all round me. And you, like my flowers, shed your sweetness wherever you go."

"Ah," says Gabrielle almost mournfully, "you do make me long to be spiritually beautiful. Little mother, there is something resting on my heart. I want you to tell me if you think me wrong to address these poor women every Friday night? Do you think it unfeminine?"

"I think anything and everything unfeminine that causes a woman to be talked about, dear. I think it takes from her that delicate freshness that cannot be too carefully preserved. I cannot bear anyone to brush roughly against my flowers, and so I cannot bear any harsh or condemnatory word to come near to you."

"Yes, I grant your thought is full of beautiful poetry, but are you not making of a woman only

a beautiful earthly poem, rather than a useful vessel meet for the Master's use? If my life ended here on earth, then you would be only too right; but if I am only here for a little while, if I am only here to work for my Master, as I believe, what then? Should I mind being talked about and roughly spoken of, even, if I can feel sure that I am honestly working for that Master? You do not doubt that I am in deep earnest in what I am doing, and that it is not from any vain motive that I speak?"

"No, I do not doubt that, but the question is whether you may not be *earnestly mistaken*."

"Can I be *that*, if I am constantly being told by some poor creature that I comfort her, or that my words have helped to heal some broken heart?"

Mrs. Argent is silent. This girl is very dear to her and it has distressed her, and does distress her, that people should talk about her as "so strange," "so very peculiar." But when appealed to in this way, what can she say? She is only silent now, and she is only too anxious to think Gabrielle right if she can. She is always fair and true, albeit her ideas of woman are poetically false.

"I wish you would come with me some Friday evening, just to convince yourself that some little good is being wrought for the Master."

Mrs. Argent hesitates. She fears this would seem like countenancing the whole proceeding, and she is not yet sure that she approves; and, besides, without knowing it, she is a little afraid of the Molesworths' opinion.

"I will ask Harold what he thinks," she says, a little evasively. "I seldom go anywhere now, and never anywhere without Harold."

Gabrielle says nothing, but she thinks that in all probability Mrs. Argent will come.

"I hear my boy's step," she says, quickly. "Is that not Harold? Ah, Gabrielle, my boy is able to enjoy what I cannot enjoy; I like him to have flowers about him everywhere. I wish him to associate me with flowers when I am gone. My poor boy," she says softly to herself.

"Why poor? I think him one of the happiest individuals in this life."

"Ah, I would he could be always as happy as he now is. Willingly would I give this poor little remnant of life to ensure *his* happiness. My boy!"

And there is a ring of infinite tenderness and pride in her voice as she murmurs these words.

"No one knows him as I do, Gabrielle; all his great, fearless strength, all his thoughtful gentleness about me. 'My eyes,' as I call him sometimes. You can't think how carefully he tells me everything and explains everything to me—the most minute particulars. Why, I know almost every bud that is coming out on my flowers." She pauses as she hears the step of this young giant whom she calls her boy drawing near.

Presently he joins them, and they enter the house together.

CHAPTER VII.

"OH, 'mother mine,' what is it? What can it be that you feel you must tell me now? Why now?" Harold asks in his gentlest tones.

"Because I now feel you are a man, Harold, as I never felt it before. It all came to me last night when I heard you talking to Gabrielle Amethyst. You are a man now, although I may try to deceive myself by still calling you my boy. Yes, a man, with a man's heart within you. Oh, Harold, what if in my love for you I have erred and done you wrong! What if already harm has been done!" And her voice dies away in a groan. "Oh, I have loved you! I have loved you!" she almost moans. "I thought I could save you pain, and now by my silence a greater pain perhaps will be given you. Have I been wholly blind!"

At these words Harold's heart grows cold within him. What is this nameless something that is coming to him now, that his mother and the friend of his youth has been afraid to tell him before?

The old lady rises and takes a step forward, but her hands are trembling, her sightless eyes are unnaturally bright. She seems to have lost her instinct in moving about, for now she strikes her hand against a chair and utters a little cry of pain.

Instantly Harold is beside her.

"Mother," he says, reproachfully, "why don't you

make your big Newfoundland dog more useful?" and reverentially the old, bruised hand is raised to his lips. He never uses the word *lead* or *guide*, it is always 'just to make him useful.' "For," he goes on, "if I am not of some use to you, of what earthly use am I? Don't be afraid, dear, whatever it is; I promise to be brave." And Mrs. Argent detects something in his voice that has never been there before.

"I knew that. Yes, you will be brave, but oh, my boy! I know now how you will suffer. Oh, it is hard upon you, hard that the innocent must suffer for the guilty. Ah, God, the sins of the fathers are indeed visited upon the children."

Two great arms wind themselves round that aged, bent form, very tenderly, almost as if fearful of crushing it; almost carrying it, he places it in the large, comfortable armchair.

Then that colossal figure bends down, and with the sweetness of a little child kisses the snow-white hair that is smoothly drawn back from the wrinkled brow.

There is something touchingly beautiful in this perfect love between utter helplessness and enormous strength. Helplessness is now suffering acutely at the thought of giving pain to Strength, and Strength is pained at the sight of Helplessness suffering.

Presently Mrs. Argent says very softly, bending over the figure kneeling before her:

"Bring me my desk."

Obediently he performs her bidding. "The desk is here, little mother," placing it on a chair beside her.

Without a moment's hesitation she takes a key from

her pocket and opens it, and takes from it a packet of old, yellow letters.

Then she hesitates.

"Harold, answer me before I give you this to read—before my hand wounds you, and perhaps turns the pure flow of your love to bitterness or cold indifference; tell me, have I ever kept you back with womanish weakness from any danger? Have I ever tried to deter you from going into peril?"

"No, never, never! You have ever been the bravest as well as the dearest of mothers. Why do you doubt me? I could never reproach you, even if you had done me wrong."

"No, thank God, I have never done you wrong, unless it be in having kept this knowledge from you for so long. Perhaps in my love for you I have erred, but if so, then believe that I have done so in the desire to spare you. It may be I have mistakenly kept silent too long. Perhaps if I had not been so blind, my boy, in every way, then I had not erred. Forgive me! Forgive me!"

This allusion to her blindness hurts Harold. He is very tender on that point. He never forgets and treats her as if she were blind.

"My mother," he says, almost pleadingly. Then he takes those letters and begins to read. There is nothing but silence for some time. As Harold goes on reading a variety of expressions comes into his face. First nothing but puzzled surprise, then quite a new expression is born into that face, a stern, bitter look that has never been there before. As he finishes read-

ing the letters flutter to the ground. He covers his face with his hands and bows himself down in very anguish of spirit. Slowly he is drinking in his draught of shame, the most bitter that man can drink.

Harold never could have known shame caused by some deed of his own committing. He might have done a thing he was grieved for having done, but never anything to make the heart blush or truth recoil with horror.

Mrs. Argent rises and gropes her way to that bowed form.

"Harold!" she whispers, drawing up his head with infinite tenderness and holding it with her two hands, "say you forgive me. Oh, my boy, I should have told you before." And very softly the words are breathed, "Say you forgive him. I know he has sinned grievously, sinned against you in giving you a branded life to bear. Ah, my God! I think of all sins that is the most heinously selfish. I did plead with him, Harold, for you, to do justice to you, if he could not give you all the right of an eldest son. I pleaded with him, my son, your father."

"My father," he whispers back, "oh, to have to utter the name 'father' with only feelings of bitterness and shame."

"Forgive as you hope to be forgiven," the old lady pleads; "he was my son, Harold; a son to shed tears of sorrow over, but a son to be forgiven, too."

"Oh, God," he almost moans, "that one's life should be blighted without one's having anything to do with it! Where is justice? What have I done that this

curse should be laid upon me to bear through life? Why did I not die as a child? A thousand times better than to live through life a thing of shame!"

"Harold, Harold, my boy! Oh, would that I could bear it for you—ah, God, the sin of the father is indeed visited upon the child!"

And the old lady's voice breaks into a sob.

"Sweet mother—for, oh, you never can be other than the truest mother to me—what have you not borne for my sake! I should plead with you for all the trouble and sorrow I have innocently caused you—I do plead with you for forgiveness for all that you must have endured for the sake of my father." He pauses, feeling thankful then for the first time in life that his mother is blind and cannot see how keenly he is suffering.

"My son's son, my dear, true grandson," the old lady cries proudly, "the noblest and bravest of men! It is absurd. It is impossible that shame can touch you! It shall not be. It cannot be."

Harold sighs.

"Have I a brother or sister?"

"A brother."

"A younger brother, my father's heir?"

"Yes," again very reluctantly.

"A brother that would be ashamed to give me the name of 'brother' even. But he need never be afraid. I would not touch his hand. I would not look into his face if I could avoid it. I hate him with the bitterest hatred that ever burnt in a human heart."

"He knows nothing of it all, Harold. He is utterly unconscious of your very existence."

There is the fiercest passion in his tone as he mutters:

"A brother ignorant of his brother's very existence! Of course such a thing must not touch his high and unspotted name! He is something for the world to be proud of! I am a thing for the world to point its finger of scorn at! My God! this is a just world!" Then he rises hastily and with thoughtful tenderness makes Mrs. Argent take the chair in which he has been sitting. She looks very pale, and her hands are trembling with strong emotion. Harold looks at her sadly.

"What a selfish brute I am," he says, remorsefully. "And you have devoted your life to me—*me*, the poor, nameless little boy. How was it you could love me? You should have hated the very sight of me. You should have loathed the very sight of your son's face."

"My first, my rightful grandson," she interrupts hastily. "I know no other. I have only this one, Harold."

"Harold what?" he says bitterly; then almost wistfully adds: "Forgive me. I must be a brute indeed to speak so to you—, you who have left all for my sake! You who have given up position, name, all, for a thing that has no right here, who was never wanted here. Oh, your love is too beautiful for me to understand! My father did not want me! my mother—"

"Hush! your mother was young, and I believe her to have been quite innocent. She was sinned against. She gave her life for you. I believe your mother was good and pure."

"Thank God for that," Harold says, with deep fervency, a real sob in his voice now.

"But surely, mother, there are few women in this world that would have done what you did for me. What claim had I upon you?"

For the third time the old lady answers, only more firmly, more proudly than before:

"My grandson! In the clear, bright light of God-- my true, true grandson."

"Little mother," kneeling before her with strange reverence in the act, "bless your boy. Bless him now, now." The white, blue-veined hands are laid trembling on the bowed, handsome young head.

"God bless thee, my boy," she murmurs, "bless thee, and may He give thee strength for the trials of this life, and for this most bitter trial that He has laid upon thee. God bless thee, and blessed thou shalt be, for He has said: 'Blessed are the pure in heart.'"

"Tell me, mother, how I can prove to you how much I feel all this strange, beautiful love that you have given to me? A mother's love is natural, but this devotion of yours seems to me as unnatural as it is beautiful. How can I ever repay this great sacrificial love that has watched over me all these years?"

"Never talk of *repaying*, Harold; that hurts me. True love wants no paying back. If I have sowed love, already I have reaped abundantly, my harvest has been one of great plenteousness. You have been to me the purest source of joy and pride."

"Can you really say that, mother?"

"I can really say that all I have done I would do again. It was hard at the beginning to cut myself off

from all that was dear to me, and to begin life anew, as it seemed to me. But I have never regretted it for a moment since. I thank God that He showed me that I should do it, and I thank God that He has given me strength to do what I have done. And, now I have told you, I know that you will have to go from me. It may be only for a time, though. I never have tried to hold you back in any way, have I?"

"I can never go from you unless you send me away from you."

There is an almost pathetic smile about the corners of Mrs. Argent's mouth. She already knows the price she will have to pay for what she has just felt it her duty to tell him. She will now have to send him from her to meet danger, perhaps death. She has tried so hard to shield him in every way. Now, when it is a question of his suffering or of her suffering, never for a moment does she doubt or hesitate. She must send him from her, although the bitterness of death will be in this parting. Change of scene may help to soften a little this which has left him bruised and bitter.

Brave and strong Harold may be, still he has the tenderest feelings of a child in some things! Sadly has Mrs. Argent wept over the very tenderness lavished upon her. Again and again has she seen reproduced in this grandson the same sensitive feelings which prompted her years ago to give up all, and to take the motherless, fatherless little boy to her heart.

CHAPTER VIII.

PRESENTLY Harold rises, and after lifting his mother's hand to his lips, with an increase of reverence, if that be possible, he goes out. He looks not only an older man, but he looks as if he had had a shock, as if mentally he had been paralyzed. He is feeling that he has passed through a moral revolution. His whole life has been changed. The whole aspect of life has been altered in a few hours. He walks on till it has grown dark. He has no idea of time now, he seldom has. Presently he passes by the shop above which Gabrielle Amethyst holds her meetings. He remembers that this is her evening for speaking to those of her fellow-creatures whom she is able to help with human help and comfort with spiritual comfort.

At the thought of Gabrielle Harold almost shivers; the thought of this pale, slim girl is bitter to him at this moment. It makes him feel the burden of his shame intolerable to him. He thinks of himself as something almost unclean now, as something that has no right to touch the hem of purity's garment. He thinks of Gabrielle in his heart with the deepest reverence, a being apart from this world. It is more than love that he has given this girl. It is the truest worship that ever man gave woman. Harold suddenly retraces his steps. Then for the second time he is listening to Gabrielle. And these are the words that he hears spoken fearlessly, fervently:

"I am going to tell you to-night what I hope may be a help to you. One of you here asked me how it was I loved you all so much. Now, I am going to answer that question. I have prayed to God to help me; yea, rather, to speak through me, so that I may speak simply and truthfully.

"It has always seemed to me a deep pity that children should become so familiar with sacred things—with the Cross and those sufferings—so that at last what ought to affect us most deeply, only falls upon ears often with total indifference. Yes, we have listened to that story of His death and suffering so often that now some of us listen to it with almost stony hearts. Alas! alas! that it should be so! Pray all of you now for a feeling heart! A heart softened by love. Love is the only true softener of the heart, believe me!

"Pray now to listen to this story of God's love for us with a new light shed upon it. Try, oh, try now to take it in as if you had never heard it before, as if it were a new revelation just sent from God to you!

"'Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.'

"Believe me, you that know not—that have not tasted of that joy—it is just the sweetest and fullest of all joys!

"When all its full sweetness rushes in upon you, then you will know yourselves to be the happiest of mortals. And you will long for others to feel and share that joy which you feel.

I do not say that I believe we can all know the exact moment of what we call our conversion—or to put it simply, the moment of our turning deliberately to God, and touching the hem of His garment of love! In my own case it was as if suddenly the scales of blindness fell from my eyes, and, like Paul, I saw Christ looking down about me. I can tell the very moment when I felt my heart rise up to my Father. That spiritual life was quickened in me by words spoken simply, sadly, but oh, so earnestly, believingly. 'Faith cometh by hearing.' It was not by preaching. It did not come to me through any sermon. Far be it from me to make light of the good sermons preached; but I had listened Sunday after Sunday, and no sermon had ever moved me as those few words of faith that seemed to draw my heart right out of myself into the presence of my Father. I often think of the sermons incessantly preached and wonder why more are not turned to their Father. Sermons often strengthen the weak in faith, but they do not so often quicken into real life the dead soul. 'Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again.'

"That is the birth of the soul. I cannot describe it to you better than by saying, it was like feeling the light of God shine forth from another soul upon mine. It was like being flooded with a great wave of infinite peace from God. I felt as if the Father had taken my heart in his hand, and drawn it near to Himself. It all came to me through a few words meant to comfort me. But those were words of luminous faith! The light which was lighting up that soul was turned

upon mine, and lighted up mine. 'This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you. That God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.' And this is just what God's messenger declared to me—'That God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.'

"But oh, he did more than simply declare that God is light. He made me *feel* and *see* that light shining in himself, and through himself. His faith surrounded him with a spiritual atmosphere of joy and peace. I do thank God with deep thankfulness that He permitted the light to shine upon me in that way. I felt the glow of spiritual light pass through and through me, and spiritual life was quickened in me. 'I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in me should not abide in darkness.'

"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.'

"It all came to me in this way. This great wave of God's love came to me through the anxious love I bore a dear brother, a brother dearer to me than my own soul. In the darkness of despair I said to him again and again, 'I want to go to no heaven in which you cannot enter.'

"Perhaps that was rebellious of me, you will say. But God read my heart, and through that love for my brother He led me to see Him the God of love. And I believe it is often so, that through some true human love we are brought to *see* and *feel* the source of all love—God the Father! That brother was such a

loving, tender brother to me that I did rebel at the thought of my being saved, and he lost, because he could not see some things as I and others saw them. He did not see God as I saw Him, yet I knew this brother could not say or do an unkind thing. Was it possible, then, I had asked myself, that because in some mysterious way his understanding had been darkened, so that now he saw through the glass very darkly, he must be lost, as so many of us are taught to believe? Like St. Paul, I said in the bitterness of my despair:

“‘I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.’

“I was just about to part from this brother for years, when I met God’s messenger. Just one of those flashing meetings which happen so often in life. A perfectly accidental meeting it seemed to my darkened understanding *then*; but *now* it does not seem so.

“‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.’

“That messenger from God not only comforted me about the future of this brother’s soul, but by his faith he led me into marvellous light, strengthened my feeble faith, and made me see my doubts and fears of my Father’s *perfect love* as real sin! He made me see as never before that God was infinite love, and he made me feel that verse, ‘Not willing that *any* should perish.’

“Such a warm, loving faith seemed to burn in this

man as I had never seen; a faith lighted up by such a pure, tender love that it shone forth on all who came within his reach. He was so filled with love for his Saviour that it flowed from his heart with a great, sweet power, straight into your heart.

"There are gradations of faith, as in everything else, and although many of us may be standing on the ladder of salvation which leadeth upward, some of us are so low down on that spiritual ladder that it is almost impossible for us to understand those so far above us.

"When you felt the soft shine of those eyes of God's messenger, then there awoke a great yearning within you to become spiritually purer altogether. Something within clamored aloud to the Great Spirit of spirits to be lifted up into an atmosphere of purity and peace. This servant of God would have been powerless to strengthen and comfort me as he did if I had not first felt and seen that light shine before men. By that light I recognized him as one of the true heirs of the kingdom.

"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

"I could not but feel 'that faith which worketh by love.' However bitter now the cup given me to drink, I can only feel my Father's hand is holding it to my lips, and in the bitterness there shall be sweetness. Grief does not become less grief! Pain does not become less pain! but it will be grief in which there will dwell hope of everlasting joy. It will be

pain, but there will spring up in it the thought, only a little while and 'God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.' One point on which God's messenger was very clear and strong was this: 'Do not slight Him and His cross,' he said, 'by supposing that evil shall ever in the case of any single soul overcome and prevail over good.'

"Ah, it takes a strong faith to believe that evil never prevails over good!

"Again he declared:

"'Faith is not credulity, but recognition—not saying yes, yes! to a thousand creeds, but simply recognizing and resting content that His will is in all things best.'

"My friends, if we could only believe that His will was best in all things, then our life would be a life of faith and a life of rest. And this man's life was a life of faith, for he had suffered much. He told me God had broken his heart, but he was one of the happiest of men. He had passed from death unto life! I do not believe that any conversion is real till we recognize God as love, and love as God. The two are inseparable, for God *is* love.

"That is just all we can see of Him at present.

"What greater mystery than God! And what greater mystery than love! 'He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him.'

"I do believe that wherever you see true, pure, unselfish love in a heart, there God is dwelling, even

though that heart has not recognized God dwelling in it. Nevertheless God is there, and will manifest Himself to it in time. God first manifested Himself to me through my true distressed love for my brother. It was through that love I was brought to see and feel a higher love surrounded me. It is so true: 'We love him, because he first loved us.' Are not these His own words? 'That ye love one another as I have loved you.' A love that laid down its life for its friends! 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend.'

"I think that with this command—that we love one another even as He loves us—we need have no fear of loving one another too much. Oh, let us pray love into our hearts, love for one another! And, believe me, with that love will come the higher love, which will lift you to undreamt-of heights. You will feel love spring up in your heart. Feed it, nourish it, as some tender plant that will in time yield you sweet fruit that will heal all your spiritual diseases.

"'If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.' Think of *this*, 'His love is *perfected* in us.' Once we recognize the meaning of this in our hearts, then we are changed creatures! I tell you this love brings with it a peace such as this world cannot give. And I do believe that love is the greatest spiritual educator that the soul can know—and a true love for some human creature, a brother or sister, or child, it may be, must come first into our hearts and so draw us to this higher and holier love!

"'He that loveth not his brother, whom he hath

seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?"

"And does John not say clearly, 'He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light.'

" 'Let us love one another, for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God.'

" 'He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love.'

"Is not our religion a religion of love? 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.' 'Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.'

"Ah, we need never have any fear of loving one another too much. The more we love some dear brother or sister, so much the more sure may we be that God is dwelling in us. It must be so. God has said it. It is absurd to talk of human love, as if there were different kinds of love. There is no difference! All true love is of God—just so much of God dwelling in our hearts. However bad a character may be, if you can still see some spark of love in it, then that is just all you can see of God for the present in that soul. 'Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much, but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.' He knew her sins were forgiven *because* she loved much. Did you suppose it was because she loved much that she was brought down to what she was, a despised

woman? No, love saved her! It was this new love which brought her to the Master's feet! And He said to the woman, 'Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace.' I am not surc that many of us who say, 'We cannot see God,' yet have hearts full of love, are not unconsciously nearer to God than those professing to know Him, and yet living with hearts full of bitterness to their neighbor.

"Yes, dear people, God is more in the heart of a loving sinner than in the heart of that man who is living in hatred towards his brother, although he may call himself a Christian and go to church regularly every Sunday."

Little does Gabrielle know to whom she is speaking these words.

"You all know my love for you," continues Gabrielle, very earnestly; "and—and now you know why I love you. Just simply because I love the Father of love so deeply that I cannot help loving you."

There is a subdued murmur, with the sound of a low sob.

More earnestly Gabrielle goes on: "I pray to you, Father, and my Father, that ye 'know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God.'

"And after you are filled with that fulness of God, may it quicken into new life other hearts. And may 'The Father of mercies and the God of all comfort comfort us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.'"

CHAPTER IX.

THE meeting 's at an end. Harold steals out unobserved by anyone. He does not wish Gabrielle to see him. The words he has just heard have not in the smallest degree touched or comforted him; on the contrary, every word seems rather to have fanned the flames of anger and rebellion burning in his heart. "My God!" he mutters to himself, as he goes out, "I am to love my brother, am I? My brother, who has stolen my birthright, my name, just because—" he clinches his hands till the pain rouses him.

"I am to forgive my father! A father who has wronged me irreparably! A father who has given life to me, only to damn that life for me! I could not do it! I can never forgive. What is the good of talking about loving your brother, or loving one who has wronged you. She knows nothing about it. She has never been tried. It all sounds beautiful, beautiful, but it is impossible, utterly impossible. O, my God! my God! I am a forsaken man!"

Strange, but as his feelings grow fiercer and more rebellious these words steal in upon him:

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

"The murderous feelings of Cain are in my heart! And yet I have been a good-natured fellow. If any one had ever told me I could have a hell like this burning in my heart, I would have laughed him to

scorn! And is it *my fault* that these feelings have been born within me? What wrong have I done? I would not hurt a fly. No, it is the fault of the man who has cast me from him as some vile thing. Why has this been given to me to bear? Where is any justice in this? Why should the sins of the fathers be visited upon the children? Rather, in a case like this, the sins of the children should be visited upon the fathers! Why should I have to answer for my father's sin in this way? There is no God, or this thing could not be! There is no justice, or I would not have been given this to bear."

The next day Harold goes to the very woman whose every word he has cavilled at and rebelled against the night before, and yet who has such a mighty influence over him that keep away from her he cannot. The thought of her comes to him in the night, and stills something of the fire raging in his heart. She is the one thing in the world absolutely pure and beautiful, it seems to him now.

"I have come to tell you," Harold says, in his abrupt way, after he has been ushered into that small room, with its masses of delicate, quivering ferns in every nook and corner, "that I am going away."

"What will your mother do without you?" Gabrielle says, in soft, sympathetic tones. "She will be quite lost without you. Won't you take that chair? I think you will find it very comfortable. Ingram says it is the most comfortable chair in the room."

Ingram is Gabrielle's step-brother and Mr. Amethyst's step-son, his wife having been married before.

Gabrielle settles herself now, with the air of one who means to enjoy a good, long chat. But Harold is not at ease; he is feeling that he is there under false pretences. He would give worlds to unburden his heart, but he dare not. How could he bring this load of miserable—to him unclean—knowledge to lay it at her pure feet? But he is determined about one thing, she shall know him as he is. All *his* wicked, black feelings shall be made known to her. He thinks, but is not sure, that she will probably show him then how evil she thinks him. The uncertainty of how she may take it is terrible to him, but he makes a bold dash at it, as he does everything, whether it be to the telling the truth or to the saving a man from a house in flames.

"I went to your service last night. I believe I got in just after you had begun, but at every word you uttered my heart rebelled, and does rebel!"

First a look of surprise came into Gabrielle's face, then a look of almost tenderness takes its place, and then Gabrielle looks out through the window, far away, and is silent. This silence, somehow, is strangely soothing to Harold at this moment. He feels that if she had begun to question him he could not have made a clean confession, which he is most anxious to do as soon as possible.

"You said last night that a man who hated his brother could not love God. Now, I know I have nothing but hate in my heart for my brother, and for my—" He pauses, he cannot say it, no, not even to her. He does not know it, but already something of gentleness

has stolen into his heart for this unknown dead father who has left him nothing but a heritage of shame.

"Your brother?" says Gabrielle, questioningly, for a moment thrown off her guard. "I did not—" and then she stops, as she notices the bright flush of shame that has rushed over Harold's face. Gabrielle grows a shade paler.

"Yes," Harold goes on, with a determined effort, "a brother that would be ashamed to own me as a brother, though. There are some things I cannot talk to you about." He speaks with a new-born dignity. "Perhaps if you knew all you would not sit in the same room with me," he adds almost fiercely.

Gabrielle looks at him, and there is something in the poor fellow's face that tells only too plainly all he is suffering.

"What am I," she answers, "that I should not sit in the same room with you? Have we known each other for so long, for so little good, that you should fancy now that because trouble has come to you, and you are feeling bitter, I could scorn you? If I do not know you, who does know you?" And her thoughts flash back to the little boy waiting upon his mother with chivalrous tenderness. "Even you cannot make me doubt you now. No, even you cannot shake my belief in the friend of days gone by." She smiles at him, but in the smile something like tears gleam in her eyes.

He hardens himself.

"Trouble, yes, but the worst is a great blot that can never be wiped out."

"If it be a blot of shame that has fallen upon you by someone else's act, then I am very sorry; but if it be a blot of shame that has fallen upon you, or that came to you through some act of your own, then—"

"Then what?" Almost breathlessly Harold asks this question.

"Then my heart is doubly grieved, for I know how you will always suffer."

Harold is silent. And Gabrielle reads that silence aright. She had not intended to find out that much, but she knows full well that Harold is far too honest to let her think for a moment that the guilt rests on someone else if it only rests on him and is guilt of his own committing. Gabrielle understands this much, that he is innocent, but that he has to suffer shame, the innocent for the guilty. Quickly she turns away her face to hide the tears that will not be held back.

Harold, who is watching her, sees these tears. He half rises. His heart is struggling within him. He speaks rapidly, never forgetting what he has become, or rather always has been.

"You won't like my saying it, but it is true. You are just all that I can see or feel of God at this moment. Through you I can imagine perhaps a Being better, but just now you seem to me the most godlike of anything or of any being I know."

"But this sympathy, this love—you—you know what I mean," says Gabrielle, a little breathlessly, "is just so much of God in me. It is His love in me which gives me the power at this moment to understand what

you are suffering and makes me sympathize with you." Gabrielle goes on earnestly: "It is not because at this moment you cannot see or feel there is a God that necessarily there is no God. I wish you would let that thought comfort you now, that it is not because we cannot see or feel a thing sometimes that that thing does not exist. But it will all come right."

"No, it never can come right. That is impossible. Perhaps in time I may learn to feel less keenly my shame, but it never can come right, *never*." Harold speaks in the bitterest tones. The very sight of those tears have somehow filled him with a more hopeless feeling.

"Ah, yes," persists Gabrielle. "You will find it will come right. I don't mean that it will ever seem all right in *your* way, in the way you consider right, but in God's way it will come all right. It is God alone who has the power of making a right out of a wrong, but He can, and in time He does do it."

"If every man had such a true friend or sister as you, I think he could not go very far wrong," Harold says fervently. "I believe you are the only true friend I have in the world." Harold ends off with something like a sob in his voice.

"Will you always believe in your true friend?"

These words very softly.

"If I didn't believe you to be my friend; if I couldn't believe you always my friend, then I should be indeed without hope, and the most miserable of men. And now, even if we should never meet again, you will think of me sometimes? I know I have no

right to say this." Harold has risen as he speaks, and is standing looking down on Gabrielle.

"Yes," she answers, slowly rising, too. "You know I will never forget you, and if we should never meet again, believe me that daily I will be with you in thought. I feel you are in trouble and I wish I could help you. Will you always believe this, that if there is any way in which I can help I will do it gladly? I would trust you as I would trust no other man except my father and brother."

Harold is silent, made dumb by a great joy that has rushed into his heart. He stands before her overwhelmed with surprise. These words are still ringing in his heart: "I would trust you as I would trust no other man except my father and brother."

Harold knows Gabrielle means absolutely every word she has uttered. Then all the blackness of that great blot sweeps over him, and he groans in spirit. He tries to speak, but cannot. The tenderness, the beautiful sweetness of her speech still overpowers him. Silently he bends down and with exceeding tenderness lifts her hand to his lips. Then he turns abruptly and leaves her. He dare not trust himself one moment longer there, but he has gone from her presence now with true, pure joy in his heart that this world cannot take from him. Nothing can take it from him. His whole heart warms at the thought. If all others in the world scorn and despise him, so will not she. Gabrielle Amethyst never said a thing that she did not mean to the very full. Her religion looks to him at this moment a very beautiful thing. Is it not

that religion that has made her so beautiful spiritually—that has raised her high above all other women—that has made her so tender, and withal so brave?

Then he falls to wondering just how much she meant by that speech, that she trusted him as she trusted no other man except her father and brother. There is deep comfort to Harold in these words, and he hopes and almost prays that she will always trust him above all men; although she can never be more than a true friend to him. And then he falls to wondering why she should trust him in this way. He is indeed honored above all men by Gabrielle Amethyst's trust! Then he goes back in thought to this new knowledge which has so changed him and his life, and his heart grows bitter within him. Life is still young with him, and yet, through no fault of his, life has been utterly wrecked for him. What is glowing in his heart he feels that love hopeless. Shall he breathe the word love to any woman—of all to a woman like Gabrielle—knowing that now to be what he is. This hope of love has only been awakened to be crushed down. He tells himself he will never see her again. He will never bring his blot of shame near to her in any way. His love can never be uttered, but he knows he can no more crush it out than he can stop breathing and live. Through life this love will go with him—a beautiful but hopeless thing.

Does one ever pause and ponder about this great wealth of unuttered love that goes on in this life—love that dare not be uttered for some inexorable reason

or right? Think you it is a small thing to love truly and deeply—but not wisely it may be—and to live out your life without breathing that love to the beloved one? God knows all. He knows all the temptations and also the self-abnegation.

CHAPTER X.

INGRAM TREMOINE is spending some weeks with his step-father, Mr. Amethyst. They have always managed to get on fairly well together, albeit they have not one taste or sentiment in common. Ingram is practical to the backbone. Mr. Amethyst is exactly the reverse; he is dreamy, and possesses the most perfect faculty of losing himself in whatever pursuit he is engaged—a faculty which, it must be admitted, is not always pleasant or convenient to those with whom you live. Ingram Tremoine is punctuality personified! Mr. Amethyst is seldom punctual unless urged on to it by his daughter.

To do Ingram justice, he generally bears this lack of punctuality on the part of his step-father with the most perfect external calm, but there are times when, with his nice exactitude about time, this lack of punctuality irritates him deeply. He has now been waiting for his father just half an hour. As the minutes steal on he begins inwardly to chafe. If Gabrielle were with him then, as is the natural wont of brothers, he would vent his perturbed feelings on her.

"Three-quarters of an hour!" he mutters to himself presently. Then the door opens and Gabrielle enters.

"I can't imagine," he begins, and Gabrielle knows exactly what is coming, "why in the name of all that is reasonable my father cannot be punctual as well

as unpunctual; I have been waiting exactly three-quarters of an hour, and shall probably have to wait another three-quarters!"

This thought is so awful to this well-regulated young man that he enunciates this awful threat: "If I ever have a child," and there is firm, unwavering decision in his tone, "that child shall be taught punctuality before he is taught anything—certainly before he is taught his Catechism." Ingram looks almost fiercely at his sister, expecting, at least, mild expostulation on her part at his remark. But Gabrielle only says very gently, with assent in her tone. "It certainly is a most important thing to have inculcated early in a child, for I do think if it is not acquired in our youth it never is."

Then, having said what she can to soothe his ire, she adds in loyalty to her father, and, womanlike, anxious to bear some of the blame attaching to him at this moment: "I am afraid a great deal of papa's unpunctuality is due to me. I am so often irregular myself."

"You mean that being so much with my father has taught you to be utterly regardless of time," Ingram says bluntly, not to be deceived by love's manœuvre.

"No, I mean that I really am not punctual," persists Gabrielle.

"I never knew you to keep me waiting a whole three-quarters of an hour!" Ingram takes out his watch for about the twentieth time and studies it earnestly. "I should not be surprised, however, if you do grow more unpunctual. You have very likely

inherited it from your father. In his case it is now such a confirmed habit, I don't see how you can well help falling into it, even if you did not inherit it."

As Ingram utters this comforting remark the door opens and Mr. Amethyst enters. There is something of true fatherly love in his tone as he says: "Ah, my boy, so there you are, ready." There is something, too, of innocent surprise as he utters the word *ready!* The truth is that he has never even thought of the hour which he himself named when arranging to go out with Ingram. He is so perfectly unpunctual that he never appreciates how perfectly punctual Ingram is.

Ingram gives a parting look of despair at Gabrielle as with his arm in his father's he passes out of the room. It is as trying in a small degree to a person who is the soul of punctuality to live with one who is utterly indifferent about time, as it is to one who is the soul of truth to live with someone who is quite regardless of his assertions. In the one case a lack of nice exactitude about time is like disease at the root of a man's purposes. In the other case a lack of nice exactitude about truth is disease at the root of his moral character!

Ingram has just returned and has made himself comfortable in one of those seductive, low arm-chairs in which the "Fernery" abounds. Something has evidently ruffled his usually calm exterior. Gabrielle is sitting some little distance from him at work on what seems to Ingram a little shirt. Ingram is really very fond of his step-sister, but he does not by any

means approve of all her *doings*. Like Mrs. Argent, he would much rather see her more like other girls. "I would like to see you more feminine," is a speech which he has made on more than one occasion, with that loftiness of tone which so often characterizes the remarks of an older brother to a younger sister.

"I think every woman has her own special sphere, and it is a great mistake for her to step out of it," Ingram is now saying to Gabrielle as she stitches away quietly.

"But, dear, I hope I am not stepping out of my sphere," Gabrielle answers very softly and a little sadly.

This brother and sister love each other very dearly, but there is no sympathy between them. Ingram is not insensitive in his way, and he feels the lack of sympathy keenly. They have many tastes in common, but that fine, subtle cord of spiritual sympathy which first attracts and then holds soul to soul does not exist between them. Ingram feels that they are far apart in thought and inclination. He would like his sister to be more like him, so that she could sympathize with him. That he should be more *like her*, so that he could sympathize with her, never occurs to him. And Gabrielle's heart yearns wearily sometimes to cross that gulf between them, and to get near to this brother so that their spirits may know each other and clasp hands.

"If I said I thought you were going out of your sphere, you would not agree with me. I know my opinion would have no weight with you." Rather hardly Ingram speaks; he is feeling this lack of sym-

pathy rather bitterly at this moment. Ingram is not a selfish brother; on the contrary, he is disposed to be a very kind one, and thinks himself aggrieved in having a sister so different from other women. And yet he never would have doubted had he been smitten down with some awful disease, that Gabrielle would have nursed him with the tenderest love. No, he has never doubted her love; and perhaps it is because he feels so sure of it that he is exacting in wishing for more sympathy. He feels in Gabrielle's love for him great, anxious pity. How different is the love we give to different people: some is mixed with pity, some with reverence, some with mere admiration. But the purest and sweetest love is mixed with deep sympathy. And happy are those who drink of this last but sweetest draught.

"I don't say it is your fault, Gabrielle. I know my father has encouraged you in these eccentricities which render you conspicuous."

"You know I never wish to do anything for the sake of being conspicuous," Gabrielle urges gently.

"What is the good of saying that, Gabrielle! You know that no woman could do what you are doing without being very conspicuous. To say that you are not doing so for the sake of being so may be all very true, but that such is the case is undeniable. When a woman preaches—"

"I have never intended to preach, Ingram. If what I do is preaching, then I cannot help it. I just began with two or three women who would not go to church. Now it has increased to a number that

does surprise me. But for that reason would you have me stop it?" Gabrielle looks almost faint from deep feeling. She is so fearful of putting a stumbling-block in this brother's way by some hasty speech, it may be, or some unguarded remark.

"Mr. Molesworth quotes that verse, 'Let your women keep silence in the churches.'"

"I believe that text is utterly misunderstood," Gabrielle answers. "We have not taken the trouble to study the spirit of that chapter. No, we have not taken the trouble to understand the spirit, the customs of the church of Corinth. In one place St. Paul has to rebuke the men with these words: 'When ye come together in the church I hear that there be divisions among you.' And again a verse or two after: 'What, have ye not houses to eat and to drink in, or despise ye the Church of God?' This, you remember, he says with regard to their getting drunk at the Lord's supper. And so, as the women interrupted and behaved in an irreverent way, while the service was going on, St. Paul rebukes them, and tells them they must keep silence in the church."

"I don't quite see, though," says Ingram, thoughtfully, "if St. Paul intends women ever to do anything like what you are doing, why he does not put it quite clearly."

"I think he does, Ingram. He says quite plainly: 'Desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.' The apostle proceeds to assure them that—'Ye all may prophesy, one by one, that all may learn and all may be comforted.' He tells the

women not to interrupt, and repeats a third time: 'Wherefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy.' What, then, is this prophecy which is so desirable, and which we are to reach out after? Here is God's definition: 'He that prophesieth speaketh to man to building up, to comfort and to consolation' (or setting right). Is this verse not very clear?"

Ingram nods assent.

"Now, just listen a few moments longer. The place is Jerusalem, the time is Pentecost. The disciples are gathered together, and, as St. Luke tells us, 'with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer *with the women* and Mary, the mother of Jesus.' And," continues Gabrielle, "the Holy Ghost in tongues of flame comes to *each of them*, 'For they *all spake* as the Spirit gave them utterance.' And St. Peter, explaining, says: 'This is that which was spoken by Joel. It shall come to pass, saith God, I will pour out of my spirit upon *all flesh*, and your sons *and your daughters shall prophesy*.'

"Don't you see," Gabrielle goes on, "that your interpretation accuses the apostle of forbidding women to the end of time from keeping the command of God, and enjoying the fulfilment of His richest promise, 'And it shall be in the last days, I will pour forth my Spirit upon all flesh.' You remember the last of the verse, 'and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Yea, and upon my bondmen, and *upon my bond maidens*, in those days I will pour forth of my spirit and they shall prophesy.'

"What, then, is prophecy, and what does St. Paul

mean by saying in that verse (generally only half quoted), 'Let your women keep silence in the churches,' that is, the meetings of Christians? I wish before quoting that verse we would just go back and read carefully the 11th chapter. Here St. Paul gives explicit injunctions to women about praying and prophesying in the gathering of Christians—that is, churches, for he could not mean me to wear a hat or veil in my closet, and prophesying can't be done alone, since, as we have seen, he that prophesieth *speaketh unto men* to building up, comfort, and consolation or setting right.

"Do you not see that in that assembly—church—in Corinth, they behaved in a very disorderly, unspiritual way, so that St. Paul has to reprove the women for chattering and interrupting and the men for getting drunk at the Lord's Supper? He ends with these words: 'Finally, then, each has a psalm, a teaching, a revelation, a tongue, an interpretation, and all are edifying one another (since you all can prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be comforted). If a revelation is made to a second, let the first keep silence, for the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets, and God is not the author of confusion, but of peace.' Then, summing up the matter, 'Desire earnestly to prophesy, but let all things be done decently and in order.'

"Again, it seems to me the Holy Spirit is pleading with us to-day for our attention to an ignored command, and a disregarded warning, 'Quench not the Spirit, despise not prophesyings, but *covet earnestly* to prophesy.'"

"Then you consider yourself one of those bond maidens who are to prophesy?" There is some seriousness and a flavor of sarcasm in Ingram's tone.

"I believe that God has put it into me by His Holy Spirit to help and to comfort, yes, and to build up some poor desponding, suffering souls." Very simply Gabrielle speaks.

Ingram is silent for a moment. Then rather abruptly: "Why don't you go to Mr. Molesworth and give your reasons, your thoughts on this subject?"

"They are not my reasons or my thoughts on the subject, Ingram. I have simply given you verses to show that we have not understood the real meaning of that verse, 'Let your women keep silence in the churches,' and that we have utterly ignored other verses which go to prove that that verse has not been understood."

"But you really should meet him and have it out with him. I must say," continues Ingram, meditatively, "if a woman sings in public and acts in public, I cannot see why she should not prophesy, as you call it. If only people would not talk and make such a confounded fuss!"

"Ingram, dear, what does it matter, even if we are evil spoken of, so long as we are truly helping and comforting, and giving the cup of cold water in the name of the Master?"

Ingram is silent. To many of us public opinion is really the only true god we acknowledge—not to ourselves, maybe, but nevertheless it is so all the same. It is the only power that sways some of us, before

whom in fear and trembling we worship. Public opinion was the only god before whom Ingram bowed. He was far more afraid of what the world, his god, would say, than of wounding the feeling of his sister about a thing that in his heart he believed to be perfectly innocent.

Alas, that some of us should be so little in spirit that we can never even guess at the true measure of that littleness.

"Mr. Molesworth says you are not orthodox." And again Ingram opens fire. "He says you are next door to a Universalist, if you are not one already, and he is afraid you are doing a great deal of harm."

"If Mr. Molesworth means that I believe eventually in the dispensation of the fulness of times we shall all be gathered together in Christ, then I am a Universalist, for I assuredly believe that most strongly."

"Well, I suppose that is not quite orthodox, eh?" Ingram puts the question doubtfully. He never darkens a church door, save when he is at home and drawn by Gabrielle's influence to go with her.

Gabrielle smiles such a winning smile that Ingram is more carried away by that smile than by any words she has yet spoken.

"No, dear, perhaps I am not what men like Mr. Molesworth call orthodox, but I do earnestly try to keep as near to the Bible as I can."

"You don't believe in any hell, then, I suppose?"

There is quite a different tone in Ingram's voice now: it is rather a tone of inquiry than of opposition.

"How could I believe in the Bible if I did not

believe in a hell, both here on earth and hereafter? But I do not believe that a loving father would punish any child, however wicked, *forever*."

Ingram whistles softly.

"Now, dear, tell me, would you have me give up something I believe to be a duty?"

"Do we not sometimes believe a thing to be a duty because we wish to follow our own inclinations? Do we not persuade ourselves in that case that what we wish is duty?"

"My answer to that is, that I had no inclination at all, and suffered much at first when I spoke, and even now I suffer more than anyone would imagine."

Ingram looks at his sister and has no doubt, for he knows her to be the soul of truth.

"I wish, then," he says, more gently than before, "that you would give it up, for a little while at any rate."

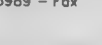
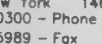
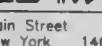
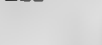
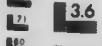
"I could not," Gabrielle answers, softly but very firmly. "I would do anything for you, but not that. It may seem a little thing to you, but it is *not* a little thing. I am very sure of one thing, what seem to us here in this life little things are in reality the great things. Ah, Ingram, if you could only hear them sometimes thank me and bless me for the little I do for them, you would understand. In your love for me you don't like it for me, but it is all right, dear: don't distress yourself."

"What is rather strange to me, Gabrielle, is, if this course is right for you to take, why is everyone so opposed to it? I do not mean people that we



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call worldly—they are not the people warmest in their condemnation of your course—but people who call themselves Christians. For instance, Mr. and Mrs. Molesworth—is it not strange that they do not agree with you, but rather oppose you?”

Sadly Gabrielle answers: “Yes, it is strange. I feel it bitterly sometimes, that those calling themselves Christians are utterly against me. I did expect some sympathy, but I confess it is quite the contrary. In grief I admit it to you. I find among Christians that spirit rampant which says, ‘I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas,’ but of those who say, ‘I am of Christ,’ I find few. Among all I find division, only too often bitter division. But for the comfort of this verse, ‘He that is not with me is against me,’ and ‘He that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad,’ I should grow faint with doubt, but I comfort myself with the thought that Christians are all trying to gather with Him, even if we do not all agree as to the manner and means of gathering.”

“Yes, you are right,” pursues Ingram.

“You do admit that?”

“I could not in truth admit anything else,” Ingram meditatively continues, “It ought not to be, for Christians start by declaring love to be the law of their life; but what is the result? Even among those calling themselves the ministers of Christ, how much ‘love, joy, and peace’ do you see? They profess to have within them the tree of life that bears the fruit of love, and yet the only fruit that often seems to ripen in them is the fruit of bitterness and strife!”

"Yes," admits Gabrielle, sadly, "I know there is no denying it. Sometimes I do feel as if there was no true leaven of pure love among us, and then when I am most despairing God shows it to me. It is strange, but I have seen it set forth most strikingly among those poor, forlorn girls when the light of Christ's love once enters into them; then that love glows with a rare brightness. 'They do love much.'"

"But 'to whom little is forgiven the same loveth little.' You are only too right, Ingram. There is so much of the old leaven to be purged out of us—the leaven of malice and wickedness."

"Poor child!" says Ingram, cheerily, "you speak as if the whole weight of the sins of Christians was upon you. Never mind, sister mine; if I don't agree with you in some of your ideas, still I should be a worse man than I am if it were not for you." And Ingram stoops and kisses his sister.

Gabrielle makes no answer, but her face grows more intensely pale as she leans over her work. She knows this brother talks to her as he talks to no one else, and her whole soul and heart are yearning over him with deep love.

"Now, this is an instance of what I mean," Ingram goes on. "Some years ago, when I was travelling, I was on board the *Southampton*, when this little incident occurred on Sunday. We had on board two clergymen. The elder man preached in the morning and gave such a stirring and eloquent discourse—to speak in the language of church papers—that the whole crew were moved in a wonderful way, and it

was the unanimous request that the same clergyman should preach again in the evening. But the younger shepherd refused to give up his place to the older shepherd. Even in spiritual matters there seems to be etiquette! So in the evening we had a sermon of Biblical dry chips, to which the elder man listened with grave attention. To do him justice, he not only behaved like a gentleman, but like a generous one."

Gabrielle smiles.

"Ah," she says, softly, "your young shepherd thought more of his own honor than of hearing his Master glorified."

Ingram was always sure when talking to Gabrielle of one thing—a patient, just hearing. However little they sympathized in these matters, he knew she would not begin by unfair opposition, or with a determination that every statement of his, however true, must be argued away. He knew she always listened patiently, and candidly admitted all that was true. He did not know, himself, how much all this gentle candor endeared this sister to him, nor did he know the whole mystery of influence which she had over him. He did love and reverence this strange sister of his, although he did not understand her. Presently, as he rises to leave the room, he lays his hand caressingly on her head.

"Bless you, dear," he says tenderly, "perhaps you are right, and I am all wrong. I can't see differently, that is all; but it won't make you love me the less, I hope?"

Gabrielle's eyes are raised to his with a wistful look.

"I will love you only more," she answers softly.

"Ah," he says, with a deep breath, and at that moment Ingram has got nearer to God than he ever was before. And Gabrielle murmurs to herself as he goes out: "For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face."

CHAPTER XI.

"HAVE you seen Miss Courtney lately?" Ingram puts this question to his sister a few days later.

"No, not very lately, but she sent me a note this morning to say if it was fine she would drive here with Lord Lithmore."

A shadow passes over Ingram's face.

"Is Lord Lithmore staying at the Grange now?"

"Yes, he has been there for the last week."

There is silence for some moments; both are busy with their own thoughts. Presently Gabrielle looks at her brother. There is something almost of motherly anxiety in that look. Well Gabrielle knows where her brother's thoughts have wandered. Ever since they were children together, at different times they have seen much of Valarie Courtney. There was a time when it used to be Ingram, Val, and Angel among themselves.

"Angel" was Valarie's name for Gabrielle when they were quite little girls together. But that time seems very long ago to Ingram as he sits there thinking.

"Your friendship for each other always seems to me so strange," says Ingram presently, with an effort rousing himself. "A woman may love without showing it, but a man never does, I think." Ingram has never breathed a word of his love for her friend to

Gabrielle, but she knows all about it as well as if he had told her again and again.

"Yes," assents Gabrielle, "our friendship must seem strange to outsiders, I suppose."

"Does Valarie ever go to church now?" Ingram abruptly ask falling into the old habit of calling her Valarie.

"No, never."

"Does she believe in nothing whatever?"

"Almost nothing, I fear, as yet."

"As yet?" repeats Ingram.

"Yes, I say 'as yet' because I hope and feel sure it will not be always so. Valarie is very true, and as she can feel and see nothing of a God as yet, she openly admits it, and I think she is right. There can be nothing worse than self-deception in a case of this kind."

"In fact she has become what Molesworth would call an 'atheist,'" Ingram remarks rather bitterly.

"I think not. Valarie has never audaciously declared that she does not believe in the existence of a God, but she simply affirms that she cannot feel sure there is a Supreme Being."

"I suppose, then, she would come under the head of 'Agnostics'?"

Gabrielle is silent, this is a subject on which she cannot speak lightly. Besides, she does not misunderstand this bitterness of speech on Ingram's part. If a man has not the right to speak tenderly of the woman who has stolen his heart, he is apt to speak of her with some bitterness.

"I wonder you have not influenced Valarie. I re-

member," continues Ingram, "her once saying to me, that if she could she would give her soul into Angel's keeping, for she knew it would be much safer there than in her own keeping. By the way, you and Lithmore ought to have much in common. He is given to preaching and teaching in Sunday-schools, and that sort of thing. Why, I believe at one time he worked with the Salvation Army and held meetings in the back slums of London."

"Yes, I believe he did. He has really done much good, and is very earnest in his work among the poor."

"Do you know, I heard a report the other day that he was connected in some way with the Argents."

Quickly Gabrielle looks up, and then the truth flashes upon her that there is some connection. There were tricks of manner about Lord Lithmore that had puzzled her. She was never with him, but she felt as if she had known him long ago. Now she sits there puzzling it all out. Yes, the likeness—perhaps the expression, rather—is striking.

"Have you ever heard anything of the kind?"

"No, nor anything from the Argents, you mean?"

"Where is Harold now?"

"I don't know exactly where he is. He left rather hurriedly some months ago, and I have felt delicate about asking any questions. Mrs. Argent misses him terribly, but she seldom says much about him, except to say he is well, and she hears from him constantly. She must miss him awfully, I should think, for Harold certainly was eyes and all that he could be to her. It was hard for him, too, in a way, for he was such

a giant in strength that it must have been somewhat of a trial to great muscles and sinews to remain passive so long by his mother's side."

"He remained with her, but not passive. He was studying hard all the time he was with her."

"What was he preparing himself for?"

"Civil engineering."

"He ought to go to America," says Ingram, with calm assurance in his tone. "He would make his mark there. I know a fellow who went out there two years ago and he has done uncommonly well. That is the place now for fellows who have brains and no end of go in them, but whose capital is either limited or nil."

While Ingram is speaking a far-away look creeps into Gabrielle's face. The mystery of life is filling her with awe. Something has just been revealed to her that overpowers her with profound sadness. She feels sure, now, that she knows the reason why Harold left so suddenly, why he had declared that something could never be right. And she remembers, too, his saying bitterly that he had a brother who would not own him by the name of brother even. Then as she thinks of that old lady living alone in her grief, wearing out her heart in one long regret for her boy who has been all in all to her, Gabrielle feels her heart grow faint within her at the thought of all the pain and misery in this world. A great wave of universal sympathy seems to rush over her with overwhelming force. Burying her face in her hands, a low sob of exceeding bitterness breaks from her.

Ingram rises quickly, but he is not beside her before

the door is opened and Miss Courtney and Lord Lithmore are announced.

Instantly Gabrielle has risen. She is quite calm now, but she cannot banish from her face at once that expression of exceeding grief. That expression has not only been seen by Lord Lithmore, but it has stamped itself on his brain in a way that nothing can ever obliterate. He has only a hasty, passing glance, for he dares not trust himself to look upon so much pain in that pale, sensitive face. He is conscious of nothing but the fact that he has been strangely moved. He has only met Gabrielle a few times before, but each time he has felt himself drawn to this woman who seems so full of intense spiritual feeling.

Valarie Courtney, not only with perfect good breeding, but with an intuitive sensitiveness for her friend, has gone straight to Gabrielle after shaking hands with Ingram, and, after embracing her with more effusiveness than she has ever been guilty of before, quickly appropriates Gabrielle in a gentle but decided way. The two men are left to make conversation for themselves.

Valarie Courtney is tall and rather slight. There are very few people who do not admit that she is lovely. She has a complexion of the most delicate cream and pink, her hair is a rich brown with gleams of burnished gold through it, her eyes are a soft brown with the light of yellow topaz in them. They can be both flashing and melting. If everyone does not admit that she is lovely, they admit unreservedly

that she is most perfectly graceful in every movement and gesture. Valarie Courtney is admitted by all, even by her own sex, to be the personification of grace. As a rule, she seems to stand on a pedestal of cold, almost icy indifference. She seldom laughs, and very seldom smiles. And yet there is an indescribable attraction about her that many find utterly irresistible. The names of her worshippers are not few, but these have to be content with a silent adoration, for they seldom dare more. The few that dared more bitterly repented it, and never forgot their daring. In one respect Valarie is utterly unlike the generality of women, she is wholly without the slightest desire to create anything like admiration in the breasts of the opposite sex. She literally shrinks from anything of the kind with an almost childish shrinking. Valarie feels nothing but first surprise and then scorn when she sees other women not only encourage but listen with evident pleasure to the flattering sweet words that men pour into their ears. She cannot understand how other women can endure even with so much forbearance, such assiduous, empty masculine attention. At the approach of any expression verging on the complimentary, Valarie instantly freezes. "I like men to talk to me as if I were a man," she avers boldly. "I will not endure flattery that is not even original, but has often been offered to scores of women before it has arrived at me. I will have none of it!"

And she had none of it. She is utterly fearless as it is possible for a human being. I is a if

she had been born without a sense of fear. She fears nothing, and she believes in nothing. She confesses with sadness that she contemplates death with more curiosity than awe. "I do believe in an after state," she once declared to Gabrielle, "but not in that sort of immortality that Christians believe in." And she had shocked Mr. Molesworth more than once by protesting that if she were very miserable she would not hesitate to take her own life in her hands. "But I am not miserable, I am simply ; perfectly happy. I am perfectly contented with all that fate has been kind enough to lavish upon me."

Valarie never goes to church, but she has great reverence for religion of all kinds, and for anything like holiness in others; hence her true fondness for Gabrielle. "Gabrielle is so sincere," she always declares. "I do not believe as she believes, but it is impossible to know her and not to love and admire her utter sincerity. She lives up to what she professes, which is more than is done by ninety-nine people in a hundred. Religion seems to me to evaporate in profession among the ninety-nine; but it is not so with Gabrielle, *she* does believe what she professes."

Valarie is always very generous and truthful. That truthfulness springs more from great fearlessness than from any deep appreciation of the beauty of truth. Untruth is often the cloak of weakness, of moral timidity. Valarie knows no moral timidity, so it is simply impossible for her ever to use that cloak of weakness.

The one great, absorbing passion of Valarie's life

is music. It is everything to her; partly, perhaps, because she has never known any home life. Her mother died when she was a baby, and her father died before she was old enough to remember him. Music possesses a power over her that nothing else does. As a child, in her wildest most passionate moods, a few chords tenderly touched would subdue her instantly. She plays beautifully on both organ and piano. Already she has given expression to some thrilling and dreamy pieces that speak of no small musical genius. She possesses the subtlest, the most keenly alive imagination that ever woman possessed. She seems all imagination sometimes—beautiful, vivid imagination. She says plainly she knows she has no heart, but that imagination has usurped the place of a heart. And yet it is this fine gift that leads her to do all that is charming and apparently sympathetic. It certainly guides her in a wonderful way to do all that is sweet and lovely. To understanding people it often seems as if she were pouring out sympathy on all those who touch her life. But possessing much heart often leads to doing much that appears silly and sentimental. It often lays one open to biting sarcasm, to cruel comments. Valarie Courtney has never yet done anything that could be called silly or sentimental. She is very gentle, with a sweet dignity that goes straight to one's heart, while her own remains cool and calm within her. This immovable heart of hers has never troubled her. She has often felt the glow of love upon it, but the burning of love within has never yet warmed it. She knows that the

hopeless love of more than one man has been lavished upon her, and she knows that no love of any man has ever yet stirred her heart to beat one throb faster.

This very impassiveness of hers gives her a power that women who possess much heart often do not possess. Valarie is utterly unconscious of this power of hers. The mere possession of a vivid imagination without knowledge, and the carefully acquired art of directing it, is like possessing some musical instrument without the power and skill to play upon it; from both, without a right knowledge, we simply produce discords. But it was not so with Valarie. She had very early discovered the possession of this glorious treasure of hers, and most carefully had she trained and cultivated it. As music is her passion, she has devoted to it all her powers of imagination. She had once thought of giving her life to painting, but she quickly gave up that idea when she found that no painting moved every fibre in her body as music did. She soon learned that nothing called forth the emotion that some faint, pathetic air would call forth. She had united, so to speak, her force with her desire, and she is now directing all her energies to send forth to other kindred musical spirits some sweet, thrilling cry, such as has never yet been heard.

Valarie is now rising to go. Gabrielle has just promised to join her the next day at a small tennis party.

"I hope you will be able to come, too," Valarie says presently, turning to Ingram.

Ingram thanks her, but there is nothing but gloomy

dissatisfaction on his face as he answers that he will be happy to come. It is the first time he has seen her for so long, he tells himself, and she has hardly spoken to him, only the merest words of a casual acquaintance.

CHAPTER XII.

"I SHOULD not be true to you, or true to myself," says Valarie very gently, "if I gave you any hope. It can never be. I have no love to give you." A look in the face before her makes her add: "It is not that I have already given it away. I would not have you think that, for it is not so."

"Thank God for that!" breaks from Ingram sharply. "No, I could not bear that."

Again and again Ingram has met Valarie lately, and again and again has assured himself that he will never be such a fool as to tell her he cares for her, for somehow he knows what the answer will be. And yet in spite of his determination he has at last dared all and received this answer. Ingram is alone with Valarie when he receives this death-blow to his hopes. Valarie had been spending the day with Gabrielle, and Ingram is walking back to the Grange with her.

"I know I have been a fool!" Ingram says, after a pause, with a tone of genuine despair in his voice. "I know it all, and yet I cannot help telling you I care for you and always shall care. I knew what you would say before you said it, and yet for the life of me I could not help saying what I did."

"I can never care for anyone, for any man, as I care for my art," Valarie answers softly, but with great decision. "My art is to me all in all—life and love combined. It is my lord and master. All the

little heart that I have—and I don't believe I have much; not as other women have heart—is given to my art! I have no heart to give you or any other man. Every thought, every feeling is flowing out in one direction. And I don't want it to be otherwise. Before my art I bow down and worship!"

"But I would not interfere with your love for your art if you would only give me the right to hope that in the future we might be more to each other. No one could have truer respect for your absorption in your art than I would. I think you would never find me exacting or ungenerous in that respect."

"I am sure of it," Valarie answers with clear decision, "but I have too much regard for you to be contented to receive so much, and to give nothing in return."

"I would be content with only your regard, Valarie. Your regard would be more to me than any other woman's love. If you would only believe this—perhaps—"

"Even if I could believe it, it could make no difference. But you are deceiving yourself. At first you might be satisfied, but after a time, believe me, there is too much of the true man in you not to grow dissatisfied at giving all and receiving nothing, almost nothing, in return. And it would not be right! But, Ingram, even if you were content, I tell you plainly that I know that no love that you could give me, no happiness that I might find through you, could compensate me for time lost from my art. I wish to give all my time, all my strength, all my power, all my

life to the accomplishing of my aim. Before any great success ever has been attained in life, immense absorption must precede that success. Now, I do not believe that sort of absorption is possible in a married life. After a time you would grow jealous of the very time I gave to music, and quite natural it would be on your part. You must see that I am right."

All this Valarie says in the softest way in the world. She always seems to be enveloped in a cloud of soft serenity, however much she is now really touched at Ingram's pain. She has a very sincere liking for him. He has never paid her one empty compliment, and has always been all that is most truly friendly, and she is not a little grieved that she has had to hurt this friend of hers. She is quite unconscious of the kind of pain he is suffering. Valarie can imagine love, but she has never yet really felt it in all its burning longing.

"Now, look at it from your point of view," and Valarie goes on quite anxiously. It would not only do you no good, but it would do you harm. It is not as if either of us was wealthy. *That* would make a difference." Ingram is a rising young barrister, and has been spoken of again and again as a man sure to make his mark in the world. "Marriage must be a mistake for a man who has to make his way in the world. It must hamper him. If I were a man I should never think of marriage till my position was assured," Valarie goes on earnestly. "Don't you see that to you marriage would be a hindrance, and not a help? With all your talents, with all your masculine power, what a life is before you!"

Ingram laughs bitterly. "You may laugh at me, Valarie, but I tell you I would rather possess the love of the woman I love than be a Cæsar or a Napoleon!"

Valarie laughs a little laugh of contempt. She simply does not believe him, because she does not understand him. She does not understand him because she knows nothing of love in its unselfish yearning.

Poor Ingram is so practical in every other way than in this hopeless love of his, that he can hardly understand it himself. And is it not often the case? Those most practical in every way do show just one spot in which they are vulnerable, and most piteous is the pain which can flow in through that one weak spot. "I believe you almost despise me for the very love I have given you," Ingram goes on presently, with a ring of exceeding bitterness in his voice.

"No, I could not despise you, but I am disappointed in you," Valarie answers clearly and with beautiful candor. "I did think you were different to other men, and I admired you for it. I thought you were so strong, so far removed from the weakness of other men."

"And now you think me weak," says Ingram sharply, "just because I have given you the truest love of my life."

No, not of your life. I do not doubt the sincerity of your feeling. Now, I dare say, it seems the love of your life, but you will find it is not so. Some day another love will come to you for some other woman who will return it with fervency, and then you will be satisfied, and I shall be thankful."

"Never," Ingram mutters, with no little passion in his tone.

Valarie frowns slightly. "You don't understand me," she says softly, "you really don't understand. I do care more for your friendship than for any man's love."

"Then why not accept what I have given you, which is more than friendship, and you know it!"

And now Ingram speaks with intense earnestness, for there is suddenly born within him one of those hopeless hopes that he knows he is not wise to cherish and which yet he hugs to his poor heart greedily. The day will come, he tells himself, when it shall be more than a fond friendship, when perhaps she may be glad of his love, and then

"Because 'more t' an friendship' is quite a different thing, if I could only make you understand! If all one's thoughts and feelings are directed in one direction is one not much surer of success than if all those thoughts and feelings are dispersed into different channels?"

Ingram gives a moody assent.

"I have made up my mind with firm determination that all, everything, shall be subservient to my art. And I think nothing can move me. Even if my heart should play me false, that, too, shall be sacrificed to the art, to which I give all."

"Are you not deceiving yourself, Valarie?" With a strange seriousness, new to himself, Ingram speaks now. His love makes him see something to which Valarie is blind in her state of absorption.

"No, I am not deceiving myself," Valarie says with assurance. "No love, however perfect, no marriage, however happy, could take the place of what is more to me than love, or any life of mere happiness. I care nought for fame! Does any true mother care more for her own welfare than for the welfare of her child? The welfare of the child of my brain is more to me than any earthly welfare of my own! Ah, you don't know what it is to send forth into the heartless world a child, the first-born of your brain, thought of your thought, feeling of your feeling. I shrink with the shrinking an author or composer alone can understand when for the first time I send forth my first-born to meet the cold criticism of the world. I used to grow ashamed of that mental shrinking of mine, that weakness on my part. I determined to cure myself once forever." Valarie gave a little shiver.

"How did you cure it? Made up your mind never to look at any papers or read any criticisms, I suppose?" Ingram says, with much interest in his tone, for Valarie has never talked about herself in this way to him before in her life, and he knows she never talks about herself to anyone but Gabrielle; and so this confidence that she is giving him is balm to his wounded spirit.

"No, that was not my cure, that would have been simply yielding to my weakness. But I did cure myself—a desperate cure, but I succeeded. I wrote a criticism myself on my own first feeble composition. I sat down and with an unsparing hand deliberately

bared to the unsympathetic gaze of the public all the deformities of my child. With a pitiless hand I pointed out all its weaknesses—weaknesses which perhaps a mother's eye alone would have perceived. It is not because the child is yours that you are necessarily blind to its deficiencies. Love is not blind. But if I succeeded, I tell you my success was hardly won. I wrote the criticism. I sent it forth."

Ingram looks down with growing surprise at Valarie. He is learning to know her this evening as he has never learned before.

"You are a brave woman, and I think you ought to succeed." Ingram speaks with admiration in his voice. "I think your life must be a success, although it is to be far apart from mine."

Could they only have seen the success of that life then! A successful life! If all veils were torn away and that life—any life that we consider successful—was laid bare, with all its sufferings, all its pains, should we then apply the word "successful" to it?

"Ah, now you are a true friend, *my* true friend, as I am proud to call you. You do sympathize with me a little?" Valarie says, with much warmth for her.

"I do not sympathize with you only a *little*, and oh, I know I could give you the truest sympathy that ever man gave to woman, if you would only let me, and it should only help you on in your life work. Did not Lewis help George Eliot? Some day, Valarie, some day, when you have found out that it is possible for genius to work with love beside it, without love diverting it from its great aim—then, then, perhaps.

dear, you will give me something that I crave. My sympathy you accept now, but I want you to accept more than that from me."

Never had Ingram Tremoine been so desperately in earnest in his life. This last appeal of his would have touched most women, but Valarie sighs a little wearily. This persistence does not touch her, it is beginning to bore her.

"Ingram"—and his heart gives a thrill at the going back to the old days of familiarity when she always called him by his Christian name—"it is not possible, but if it should ever happen that I change—mind you, I don't believe it ever could be—I promise that you alone shall give me that sympathy in the way you mean. And now I want you to be just my true friend as of old. Promise me this."

"I promise," says Ingram, feeling that now he must be satisfied, if it is possible for a man to be satisfied with such a meagre hope. He knows Valarie well enough to know that after this appeal of his he must not dare another.

"Forgive me," he goes on, with some outward calm, "and know that I can never be other than your true friend. My life is yours. It never can be anyone's but yours; even if our lives are to be spent far apart, as you have decreed, still my life is yours, only yours. And now, tell me, after you sent forth that criticism, what did you do after that?"

The weary ring has died out of Valarie's voice, and there is now only excited interest.

"I suffered much. When I think about anything

deeply, sleep often vanishes from me. I spent three almost utterly sleepless nights, and then I began to fear I had mistaken my powers of endurance, that the self-abnegation that I had imposed on myself was greater than I could bear. Sentences from my own criticisms came back to me again and again with cruel force. I began to feel I had mistaken my own strength when something saved me."

"What was it?"

"Someone spoke to me of love."

Ingram gives an impatient movement.

"That circumstance annoyed me, but it saved me. I felt as if I must have been unfaithful to my motive in life for anyone to think of love in connection with me."

Ingram longs to say, "How absurd!" but he refrains.

"Yes, the very idea of any other love seemed to me a species of infidelity to my great absorbing aim. Have you ever known what it is to feel thankful to someone for arousing in you some new feeling, if it is only a feeling of annoyance? The entrance of that new feeling of annoyance loosened the tension of feelings that had been holding me with a power from which it seemed impossible to free myself. I thanked that man for this new feeling. I breathed again. I drew in one long breath of exaltation. I had conquered myself, inasmuch as I had learned myself, and had found out how to conquer myself. There is scarcely any feeling of keener gratification than that feeling of having conquered yourself! And now, you will not understand me—perhaps you will laugh at me—but

day after day, and often at night, I am striving to reach an unexplored region of beautiful sounds, sweet thrilling sounds that have never yet been listened to or heard by human ear! In imagination I am always wandering about searching for this unknown region but I invariably find myself wandering back to the old beaten tracks. But some day I will reach it. I know it. I feel it. I shall find that region with beauties of conception such as I dream of. Others have gathered rare and lovely flowers of thought and presented them to the world in their freshness and fragrance, through the medium of painting, music, or literature, it may be. And why not I? Yes, I know it. I shall yet find flowers of thought rare and brilliant. It may be hard to transplant them in all their free, glowing loveliness, but it has been done, and I, too, will do it. Oh, Ingram, if I could only compose a spirit-stirring, uplifting prayer like Fesca's 'Sylphide,' I think I could die happy. Have you heard Gabrielle play it since you came back?

"A gloriously elevating refrain, indeed," I answer, with much enthusiasm.

"I shall strive till I reach it," Valarie goes on with something almost of ecstasy in her voice. "Already I have succeeded in a small degree. Faint and thin, yet I have pursued the shadowy thought till it has become a reality. Already I have grasped that mystery of mysteries, original thought, thought out in all its sublime freshness. It is strange and utterly mysterious how one thought will strike forth many thoughts. And that flashing of thoughts through the brain must ever

be a mystery, and the originator of thought the greatest mystery of all. How often it seems as if one were only the medium through which the thought passed, rather than the originator of that thought. I wonder if any mother ever held her child in her arms with more exultant joy than I when I hold in my mind some new thought. The world praised that first effort of mine, and pronounced it original. It only made me long to send forth to the world what I considered worthy of praise."

"Are you the 'Idée' of the musical world?" Ingram asks, suddenly.

Valarie nods a gentle assent, but she is full of some thought at this moment and continues in a voice of pathetic sweetness: "I am haunted by one presentiment. All is bright before me in life now, but what if all that I am searching for, all this preconceived vividness of thought, should burst on me suddenly when, perhaps, it is too late, too late to grasp it and hold it and give it to the world! That it will come to me I have no doubt; even in dreams I have climbed up the ladder of imagination and listened to the most thrilling melodies! But what if all too late, too late, it should come to me?"

Valarie's voice sinks to a whisper; there is something suggestive of terror in her tone.

"But why should that fear haunt you?" And Ingram touches her hand with tender reverence. She seems so far from him, so wholly unconscious of all his aspirations and suffering. "You are young, you are strong," he goes on. "It is not right to indulge

in such fancies. I did not think you knew the meaning of the word 'fear.'"

"Yes," she says quickly, "I know no fear for myself. Life for itself, the mere pleasure of existence, is to me of little consequence. I do enjoy life, but I value it for what I long to accomplish. I do not fear death, because I do not believe there is such anguish connected with it as many believe. It is part of the course of nature, and should be all right. But life in connection with my art is most precious to me. The thought that this life should cease before I have immortalized that thing which I feel burning within me does haunt me, and it is the only fear I know."

"Then life is indeed blessed to you if that is the only fear you know," Ingram answers, with some slight sarcasm in his voice. "My advice is to send such a thought from you and never to let it have entrance in your brain again!"

So speaks the practical wisdom of this world. Stifle, it says boldly, that one thought which is striving within you to draw you from this world's fleeting shadows.

"I will try to be sensible," Valarie says, sadly. "I know it is very foolish of me. I have confessed to you my weakness; forgive me for having inflicted so much of myself upon you, and thank you for all your patience with me. Will you come in? My aunt will be delighted to see you."

But Ingram declines, as it is growing late.

"Good night," and Valarie puts her hand out with tender gentleness. "You and Gabrielle are the dearest

friends I possess in the world, and you know I would not hurt you or give you a moment's pain."

Ingram holds her hand for one moment, then he turns quickly and retraces his steps in the gathering gloom with something very like a groan breaking from him. His heart is sore, but it is not in his nature to despair wildly, and very soon hope is busy in his heart again as he thinks of her promise that if ever she should change he is the only man that shall give her sympathy. Practical wisdom should have told him the wisest course was to stifle this hopeless love of his, but in this case love is so strong that it stifles practical wisdom.

CHAPTER XIII.

"OH, papa," she pleads in great earnestness, "let me go to her; she is lying there all alone with her little baby, and only a deaf old nurse. They say that not one woman has gone near to her." A faint flush spreads itself over Gabrielle's face, usually so creamily colorless.

"But surely, my darling, there must be someone more fitted to go to her than you."

"Ah, that is just what everyone says, and so no one goes. Is that not what the priest and Levite said when they went on their way? Oh, papa, don't let me do the same thing! What is the use of my preaching, as the people call it, if I am too weak to act when the time comes for action; if I shrink from what is painful when it comes near to me and needs my help, my sympathy, my love? Will not that life have been given in vain for this very act of discipleship, if now I am too sensitive to go and pour in what oil and wine I have had given to me by the Master? Mr Molesworth has been to see her and has given her a tract. Mrs. Molesworth says it is no place for a pure woman. Oh, papa, in sympathy for that poor thing lying there all alone with her little baby, I feel as if I could wish—could almost like—to go down to where she is suffering, to be able to sympathize with her entirely!"

"My child, I never knew anyone so full of love and sympathy for suffering as you are."

"Have you not taught me to pray that love and sympathy into my life?" she answers simply. "Oh, but it is a hard, cruel world, papa. I go down on my knees every day and pray that my heart may grow more tender day by day—that I may not see a dog suffer without suffering myself. Am I not a woman," Gabrielle exclaims in tremulous, rapid tones, "just like her? Perhaps in God's sight not one whit better or purer than this poor, forlorn creature."

Mr. Amethyst winces. "No, no, my daughter!" as if the mere suggestion hurt him, as if the very comparison was contamination to this pure, great-hearted daughter of his. "There can be no comparison."

A wistful light stole into Gabrielle's sad, yearning eyes. "Papa," she urges, with an almost disappointed ring in her voice, "do you think our Master would think it contamination, whatever the world might think?"

"I will go, my darling," Mr. Amethyst says, decidedly and tenderly. "It is better that I should go."

"No, it is not better that you should go," breaks from Gabrielle passionately. "It is not your place so much as it is mine. As a woman it is mine—mine is the rightful place beside her. Every woman owes to another woman—yes, to every woman—a special duty. It is my duty as a woman, and not yours as a man. If women would be truer to each other, then men would be truer to women. I would to God there was more Christ-like love in the heart of every

woman for women. At this moment it would be agony to that poor creature to see a man beside her pitying her. I shall not pity her," says Gabrielle softly. "I shall only try to comfort her, and so to really help her. I shall only try to let her feel that I, too, am a weak woman, and but for the grace of God might be lying where she is lying."

Again Mr. Amethyst winces. He has indeed brought up this daughter strangely. He alone has educated her. He alone has been her constant companion, and yet in a marvellous way he feels she has far surpassed him in this wealth of Christ-like love. He feels it deeply. He thanks his Master for it, although his earthly father's heart shrinks from the thought of impure contact of any kind for his only daughter.

"As a woman it is my place, papa, and you will not keep me back. She is Christ's child, if we could only always see it in that light. She has wandered away in the dark, and now we must bring her back into the light, for 'he is not willing that any should perish.' Oh, let me go to her and win her back to Him, the fountain of all purity. If it is His will let me help to lead her back to that living water, that she may drink of that water and be cleansed from all uncleanness."

"You shall go, my child," says Mr. Amethyst calmly. "I will not keep you back. I will not be a stumbling-block in your way. I will not prevent you from walking in the bright light which your Saviour has shed upon you. He has indeed shed a brighter and fuller light into your heart than into the heart of your father."

"Ah, no, papa! If I were a father I am sure I should do just the same, or I should feel just the same if I did not do it. It is only your exceeding great love for me that makes you fearful. Don't I know that, dear?"

Mr. Amethyst shakes his head. "No, my darling, there is a teaching not of this world, and to you it has been given. You have learned from the highest Master. And I thank Him. My love for you is great, but it is still of the earth, earthly. It has not yet washed itself clean from selfishness in the fountain of His pure love."

Gabrielle puts her arms around him. "You understand me," she goes on, almost anxiously. "To be able to comfort her, I must make her feel that I know myself weak, just as she is weak, and with all a woman's capabilities of suffering. Strength cannot comfort weakness, but weakness can. And I hope I may be able to help her in every way. And oh, papa"—with her arms wound round her father's neck,—“And oh, papa, I might have been just like her—fallen and lonely and lost—in the world's eyes, I mean! For oh, my darling love, we cannot tell anything about the temptations, and we must not judge: in God's sight she may be stronger and purer than I am. Perhaps He may say to her soon, 'Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much, but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.' That verse does comfort me when I see a soul overwhelmed with the burden of its sins. What have I ever done that I should be loved as I am by my

earthly father—much less by my heavenly Father?" Gabrielle's eyes are quite bright and tearless as she rises to leave her father, but from his eyes great drops are falling.

CHAPTER XIV.

GABRIELLE'S face shines with a holy joy as she goes forth on her mission of love. But when she gets to that little cottage someone is there before her. There is no surprise in Gabrielle's look as she puts her arm round Valarie and kisses her softly. These friends understand one another, and often meet in this way.

"I am so glad you have come," Valarie whispers. "I knew you would come. Poor thing, she is so ill she knows no one. And the little baby is such a tiny creature. I have just fed it with some milk I brought with me, and which nurse Durling prepared for it to take."

And then they both silently busy themselves about many things in that small chamber of suffering. Valarie leaves all to Gabrielle's wisdom. Valarie, who is always so proud and fearless, now gently submits all to this friend of hers. It is not the first time that these two have met in this way, by the bed of suffering and sometimes of death. And this is the bond between them; when it comes to the act of self-sacrificing love, then they meet side by side. It is true that in matters of belief they do not see alike, but which brings us nearest to the Son of Man, I wonder, an act of self-sacrificing love, or what the world calls orthodox belief? What was the good of Mrs. Molesworth's orthodox belief? It was as a barren tree to Valarie, for it brought forth no fruit.

Ah, dark and distorted may be the belief which Valarie holds, and yet never does she waver for one moment in giving free course to the tender love that carries her straight to the bedside of suffering. And if she has love in her heart, true, tender love, and if God is love, what then? Might there not be the life-giving spark of the Divine in her heart in spite of her blind ignorance? Call it mere impulse if you like, impulse springing from a vivid imagination. Yet, surely, there must be something pure and true at the source of that impulse to produce such sweet waters. After all has been done that human hands can do for suffering, after the small room has been made fresh and pure, and after the old, deaf nurse has been sent to take a little rest, Valarie and Gabrielle go out into the cottage garden.

There is a delicate odor of mignonette and pinks and southernwood. The little garden is full of sweet, bright flowers, such as one sees in every cottage garden in England, but to Valarie no flowers have ever seemed so beautiful as these. She draws in a long breath of deep satisfaction at being once again in the bright sunlight. Nature speaks to Valarie as Nature alone can to such a mind as hers. Gabrielle, too, draws a deep breath of relief, and looks up into the heavens. The clouds always have for her a strange fascination. As she gazes upward a tiny, fleecy cloud, floating along in the living blue, speaks to her with a new power. It is as if that soft whiteness sheds itself over her very soul, now so stirred by the suffering she has just witnessed, and her spirit rises in silent communion with the great unseen Spirit.

"Come and sit down, Angel, dear; you are very tired. I know how your sympathies always wear you out." And Valarie carries her friend off to the rustic seat beneath the elm tree. She gently places her in that seat, and then sits down on the grass beside her. As little girls they have often played in this garden when Valarie's old nurse lived in the cottage. And as they sit there now each is busy with her own thoughts. It seems but yesterday that they were both playing in the garden, picking flowers and making daisy chains, and now—

"Life is a mystery," says Valarie aloud, and then looking up she puts her hand softly on Gabrielle's and goes on earnestly: "I was so glad when you came. Mrs. Stubbs is so blind and deaf, I don't think she knew it even when the poor thing fainted. Gabrielle, how strange it is! Why are women so hard on other women in a case like this? It is not as if the sinner does not suffer here on earth for her sin. For what sin is there that holds within it so terribly its own punishment? Look at this!" And Valarie holds up, with a little derisive laugh, a tract the title of which is, "A Cry from Hell." "Mrs. Molesworth sent it to that poor thing in there on her death-bed, perhaps. I don't know how it seems to you, Ang^l, but to me it is like using what she calls her religion to insult another. What does she mean by sending a thing like this to that dying creature? She will not come to her. She will not touch her with her little finger, but she will offer her an insult like this, knowing nothing of the case save that the woman has sinned and instantly

met her punishment." There is bitter indignation in Valarie's voice, and she tears the little tract into a thousand pieces and scatters it to the winds. "If that is religion, then may I live and die without any particle of such utter humbug!"

"Hush!" says Gabrielle, very quietly. "'Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.'"

Both are silent for a few minutes, then Gabrielle continues: "Make no mistake, dear; that is not true, pure religion that will not sacrifice itself sufficiently to look on suffering; and on sin, it may be. It is no pure, undefiled religion that dares to judge. Already her sins in God's sight may have been forgiven. How can we dare to limit the Father's love? That love in its infinity says, 'Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more.'"

"Your religion always seems to me utterly different from other people's," Valarie answers decidedly. "I never can understand how you and the Molesworths can hold one belief in common when your whole course is so very diverse."

"But, dearest, there is such a thing as saying 'Yes, yes,' with the mouth, while the heart within remains cold and mute. There is such a thing as holding an orthodox creed—according to the world—and yet holding a dead heart as well. 'Take heed, therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness.' There is such a thing, it is plain, as having what we believe to be the light, while all the time we are in darkness."

"Well, dear, I don't know whether you have the true light or not; I only know your whole life is lighted up with what I should call your own individual effulgence. But you will object to that expression."

Gabrielle has been gazing up into the sky. Now she looks down at Valarie, sitting at her feet, and answers calmly: "Yes, I do not believe there is such a thing as our own individual effulgence, as you call it. If you would only believe that, dearest. I know I have none of my own. I wish I could get you to see that truth clearly, then you would understand just what is your friend, and just what that is which may shine out of her. I have no light of my own. Whatever light you may see is given me from above."

Valarie smiles. She thinks Gabrielle rather misty, rather incomprehensible, but nevertheless she believes in Gabrielle firmly. There is no one on earth for whom she has a truer admiration, a warmer love. But she firmly believes that Gabrielle, in her religious fervor, attributes to a higher power what is really her own peculiar natural goodness and sweetness.

Presently Mrs. Stubbs appears at the door, and Gabrielle rises and goes in. Valarie follows. The poor little baby is in convulsions, and Mrs. Stubbs thinks the doctor must be sent for.

"Poor little thing!" says Valarie, with real suffering in her tone. "Why should you suffer in this way? Why should you enter life to suffer, and go forth again from whence you came? No, there are mysteries in life that can never be answered here. All religion seems to me incapable of answering satisfac-

torily some of the great puzzles of life. Religion may comfort some souls, but certain questions it can never solve."

"Else where would be our faith in the Father?" answers Gabrielle gently. "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.' At any rate, we know that the first part of that verse is true. The precious bodies of our dear ones, we know, are only here for a time, and we know this much of the last part of that verse, we cannot see the spirit. Ah, Valarie, all that seems to us so dreadful here is only temporal—for there shall be no more death. Thank God for that."

Valarie rises and goes off for the doctor. Gabrielle returns to the sick room. Mrs. Stubbs is doing what she can for the sick baby, whose convulsive contortions are terrible to witness. What is there in this world more heartrending than to watch a baby suffer? It is the speechless agony that cuts one to the heart always, that inability to tell out the pain endured! To watch dumb pain is almost maddening to a sensitive heart. And Gabrielle is now living through one of those ordeals in life through which most of us have to pass sooner or later. Thank God if in that ordeal your heart is not bound up with love for that suffering creature; for then bitter indeed is the laceration endured in every fibre of your heart!

Presently the poor mother moves restlessly, and Gabrielle goes to her.

"Where am I?" she asks feebly.

"Among friends," Gabrielle answers gently.

"That is not true," with something of pride in her voice. "I have not a friend in the world."

"You are wrong," Gabrielle says very firmly. "You are among friends. I am your friend."

At these words there rises to heaven the despairing laugh of a broken heart. It is a laugh worse than the sound of any moan of pain, any cry of grief. It is a laugh which only a soul sunk in the depths of shame can give. It is as if that laugh has struck Gabrielle to the heart. It says so much more than any words could have said. Gabrielle burst into tears.

"My God!" comes from the woman, in a tone almost of envy. "I wish I could weep like that. Ah, I have not shed a tear for years." Then in a softened tone, "But why do you cry?"

"Because my heart is sorry for you. Because when you laughed in that way I knew how much you had suffered."

"Yes, God knows I have suffered; but you would not be sorry for me if you knew all. You would say there was no excuse for me, and you would perhaps turn from me with loathing."

"No, I should not do that. I should only be more sorry for you, for then I should feel how much deeper must be the remorse which stings you if you can find no excuse for yourself. But you must not talk; only just think, as you lie there, that God has given you a friend who is so sorry for you that she is ready to do anything to help you. I, too, might be where you are if I had had like temptations. God alone knows."

"No!" cries the poor woman vehemently, "that is not possible. Look at your face. No one with a face like yours has ever done what I have. Look at your eyes, that have just wept for me—for me! Oh, God, I have sinned, but my punishment is more than I can bear." And she turns herself away from Gabrielle, with her face to the wall, and Gabrielle knows presently that she is softly crying to herself.

Mrs. Stubbs is surprised at nothing that Gabrielle may do, for she has known her long enough to say of her: "Miss Amethyst is that peculiar that a body never knows what next she may say or do." So when Gabrielle takes the baby from her, which has been lying still in her lap for some time, Mrs. Stubbs goes off for a little rest, with the words of an old woman's wisdom, "Might as well rest while you can, for a body never knows what will happen next."

And that night the angel of death draws near, and while the mother lies there unconscious, it touches that little baby lying in Gabrielle's arms, and takes it away from this world of sin and suffering. Resting in Gabrielle's arms, that sad-looking baby, unloved, never wanted in this world by mother or father, breathed its last tired breath. Although unbaptized, doubt you that it went straight back to the Father's bosom of tenderest love?

Not many days after, Gabrielle knows that her tears have saved a soul from despair and washed that soul in a new hope. No tracts, no sermons, no words ever could have saved it. It was the cup of cold water, the water of tender-feeling love, that flowed straight

from one human heart to the other heart parched with sins and despair.

Oh, fellow-travellers in life's weary journey, there are times in our lives when we don't want tracts, we don't want preaching; when the flood of sin or of misery has swept over us and has left us stranded and struggling. We just want the tender, human love poured into our bleeding wounds. We just want the oil and wine of sympathy and love poured into our hearts. Oh, God, how we all fail each other! How often in our hour of bitterest extremity our nearest and dearest fail us, just when we need our bruised nakedness covered over with the garment of loving sympathy. And there are some who seem incapable of giving sympathy. If we go to them with our bodily or spiritual suffering, they only stand beside us calmly, as if they were taking notes as to just how much Christian resignation we possess in our suffering. The thought of pouring in oil and wine into our wounds, of lifting and putting our bruised, fainting body on their own breast—otherwise "bearing one another's burdens"—never occurs to them! That would all be too much like pampering one, perhaps. And yet, "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

CHAPTER XV.

TWO YEARS have slipped by calmly, almost uneventfully, to all except Valarie, who in these years has earned no mean celebrity in the world of music. But she has toiled hard for all that she has earned. Nothing has ever had the power to move her in her firm determination to devote everything—time, life, all—to that one great purpose of her life, that one glorious art—music. Valarie is indeed more firmly wedded to her art than she ever can be to any husband.

Lord Lithmore is often at the Grange, and Valarie sees very clearly what the attraction is that brings him away from his own beautiful place to their part of the world. She often wonders if her friend Gabrielle ever suspects how much reverential devotion this grave and often called radical man has given her. But in these two years Gabrielle has just gone on calmly living her life of self-abnegation. That life has not been without its fruit. Although at times keen disappointment and utter weariness have been no strangers to her, yet there is one soul to whom she has been the direct means of bringing peace—that poor woman over whom she shed tears of sorrow that night in Mrs. Stubbs's cottage, and whose little baby died in her arms. The love that was born in that poor creature's heart that night for Gabrielle is a love not to be measured on earth. To say that she would have laid down her life

for Gabrielle would not convey an idea of the humility that is mingled with the intensity of her love. To be near to Gabrielle, to serve her, is all she lives for. The thought of ever being parted from Gabrielle so that she cannot get at her easily, and listen to her voice and see her face, haunts her with a horrible fear.

"Oh, do not leave me to myself again," she had sobbed out to Gabrielle more than once. And Gabrielle has reassured her each time.

There is no particle of self-confidence in Ann Newbridge; she fears for herself, as Gabrielle has no fear for her. But Gabrielle has promised she shall never leave her, and something like true peace is settling in her heart.

Gabrielle has grown a little thinner, a little paler, in these last two years, but that atmosphere of peace which always surrounds her has deepened into an atmosphere of more joyous peace. Her life seems to be one stilled to its very soul in an unruffled serenity. Pain and suffering always have the power, through her marvellous sympathy, to move her. Very tender, very prompt, does this sympathy make her in yielding herself up in body and feeling to any suffering of mind or body that comes near to her.

Mr. Amethyst alone has remained just the same, just as devoted to his books and to all sorts of theological subjects as ever. As unpractical, as unpunctual, and as charming as ever! Always full of some abstruse question, he is still as inconsiderate about his own comfort as about the comfort of others. Gabrielle shields him and protects him from all trouble and

discomfort as perhaps only a thoroughly unselfish and loving daughter can shield a father. She does it all with perfect unconsciousness, because the love is so true and tender for this father that she could not be otherwise. What to outsiders is a beautiful devotion, to Gabrielle herself is simply the joy of her life.

Mr. Amethyst has grown so accustomed to all this devotion that it never occurs to him as strange even that things should be so managed by his daughter that nothing troubles him, and that he simply lives surrounded by his books and in his books. He hardly ever sees now what is nearest to him; his thoughts are always far away, or centred on some deep question of ritualism, or, it may be, baptism. He has a wonderful power of concentrating all his thoughts on the subject in hand. Thus as he is always concentrating his thoughts on some new subject he is always losing sight of what is nearest to him.

Are not some of us born with an imperfect mental vision, so that things nearest to us are imperfectly seen; which things, if viewed from a distance, would appear much clearer in every way, more sharply defined altogether?

Mr. Amethyst's mental vision was just the opposite of shortsightedness, for his range of vision took in clearly at a distance objects which near by were entirely overlooked. This imperfect mental process on the part of his stepfather is another cause of irritation to Ingram, who is again at home for a holiday. He has protested to Gabrielle that his father is growing more dreadfully unpunctual every day of his life.

Gabrielle gently and lovingly makes every excuse that is in her power to make truthfully. "I know papa becomes very much absorbed in what he is doing, but you know we are all differently constituted, and we are not all gifted with the same powers of concentration," Gabrielle urges gently, after some pointed remark from Ingram on his father's habits.

"My dear Gabrielle, not to the exclusion of one's duties; to give oneself up to the power of concentration, as you are pleased to call it, to the exclusion of plain duty, must be wrong. You must excuse my saying it, but when those duties are left for someone else to perform, then it comes as near to being selfishness as anything can be. Everything should not be left to you while he immerses himself in his books."

"There is not much to do, you must remember, dear!" Gabrielle answers lightly, and longing to change the subject. "If there was much to be done in our small household you know our father would not leave it to me."

"Because a duty is small it does not make it less a duty," pronounces Ingram sententiously. "Because you never think for yourself, that is no reason why others are not to think for you."

"Now, there you are all wrong, dearest! I do think for myself. I should like to know what this is but thinking for myself. When I knew you were coming, weeks beforehand, did I not arrange so that I might have much time to enjoy you, and am I not enjoying you? Did I not play tennis almost the first thing this morning? How can you talk about my not thinking for myself?"

"I believe you just played to please me."

"Well, if I did, it pleased me to please you." She rises and, half kneeling, puts both her hands softly on his.

"I want you to be so happy while you are here, Ingram, really happy."

"You are always wishing to make everyone happy, I know, but do you ever think of your own happiness?" Almost impatiently the words came from Ingram. "Do you know, when I am with you I always feel as if you were somewhere high above me, somewhere up on the mountain tops?"

"Ah, that is not a nice feeling," answers Gabrielle. "Why should you feel like that? Tell me, what shall I do to make you feel that I am on no mountain top, but very near to you?"

"Try and be less unselfish, dear," is Ingram's reply, as he kisses her on the forehead. "Now, as I read to you put away your work, and let me see you utterly idle, gloriously indolent, for once in your life."

Gabrielle smiles and puts away her work, and as she sinks back into the cosy armchair, she feels she is getting a little nearer to this brother of hers, over whom she has yearned so longingly for years.

The way in which we think we can most influence another soul is not always the real way by which that soul is influenced. It is often by some to us wholly imperceptible means that that other soul is influenced and won; some small act of ours, of which we are utterly unconscious. A smile, it may be, that we give, hardly knowing that it has been given, or the tender

touch of a hand. We most of us care too much about understanding and seeing the result of what we do, not content to just simply do the loving act and smile the smile of love, and then leave the result in God's hands.

CHAPTER XVI.

"If you only had a little bit of heart, of true, warm heart, instead of all this intense imagination!" So speaks Ingram after two years of hard, imposed silence. Valarie and Ingram are wandering about the garden at the Grange. They have been playing tennis with Gabrielle and Lord Lithmore. These last have gone to the house to look at a rare orchid, and so Ingram is left with Valarie, and not for many minutes has he been in doubt as to what he will say.

"Far from wishing that I had more heart, I wish I had not any heart at all," Valarie answers lightly. "It is your people with much heart that never do anything at all in this world. The heart always interferes with the mind terribly. It hinders the free action of the brain and lessens its full power. You know it is the case."

"You may be right; yes, I think to some degree you are right. And yet at times, Valarie, I have almost wished you were the most commonplace woman, so far as genius goes, with a true-loving heart, rather than what you are—all cold, calm intellect."

There is something of settled bitterness in Ingram's tone at first, and then the pent-up longing breaks out.

"Valarie, why may I not hope now? You have succeeded wonderfully in these last two years. Now that you have laid the first stone of your musical fame, you are not likely to falter or even swerve from your

aim in life. My near sympathy should only encourage you onward. I know I could sympathize with you as few men could. I know that in the main you are right, and that few men would have the generosity to urge a wife on to the goal of fame. But you could depend on me. I would only help you in every way. Only give me some hope, Valarie! I cannot root out this love for you, that has grown up in me from youth to manhood. I can never love any woman as I love you. Will you not give me some ray of hope?"

"I would that I could." Almost sadly Valarie speaks. "It seems more impossible than ever. Poor Ingram, I am so sorry!" and with genuine feeling of sympathy she puts her soft, cool hand on his. A puzzled look comes into his face. "I cannot understand it. You have the whole world before you. You, too, have your aim in life; you, too, have succeeded. You have worked hard, and everyone speaks of you as of something more than a merely successful man, and yet in spite of all this glorious career before you, you seem to care so much for the love of one woman!"

"Yes," with increasing earnestness, "I care so much for the love of one woman that all is as nothing in comparison to gaining your love. I know that the hope of some day winning you is the inspiration that has borne me along through life."

"And yet a wife is often only a burden. It must be much easier to make one's way in the world unfettered." There is a shadow of scorn in Valarie's voice.

"You do not understand," and then, very slowly, "perhaps you cannot understand. A love like mine rises above all ambition. It crushes out all other desires."

"I fear, then, love is a debasing thing, if it carries us away from all high and lofty aims. Surely your intellect must condemn you?"

Ingram looks at Valarie sadly.

"Which are the highest and loftiest aims in life God alone knows," and in his feeling of despair Ingram draws nearer at that moment to his God than ever before. "I begin to think," he goes on somewhat irrelevantly, "that Gabrielle has the best of it." He turns from the large, soft eyes appealing against his love for her. He turns from her in the despair of heart and spirit. A sob breaks from him. Pangs of despairing agony have wrung forth that sob from the strong, suffering heart.

Surprise fills Valarie's heart. Slowly she has taken in how much he has given her, for she has known Ingram from a boy, and she knows that he is not easily moved. She draws nearer—again she touches his hand.

"Ingram, I despise myself as the cause of your pain. I cannot bear to see you suffer! I wish I could care for you. Forgive me, and forget me." She draws nearer to him in all her beauteous youth, in all her lovely grace. She is more sorry now about this hopeless, strong love of his than she has ever been about anything of this kind in her life. But she is so destitute of anything approaching the love he gives

her that she is quite unconscious of the fire burning within him at that moment.

Ingram gazes down on her with the hunger of love in his eyes. He draws a long, deep breath. His love is now a glowing fire within him! Despair is almost maddening him! A change comes over him. Love, which a moment before could give a sob at the thought of lost hope, now, mingled with despair, changes him, changes all his feelings from grief to bitter wrath. His black eyes gleam with passion.

"Valarie!" he cries, grasping her hands, "you have placed within me the demon of despair. Teach me to hate you now, and I will thank you. Oh, Valarie, drive out this demon and in its stead place hope!"

Valarie tries to draw away her hands, but they are only more strongly held. His eyes flash down on hers strangely; more passionately still he goes on in low, gloomy tones: "I cannot do without you—cold, impassive as you are! I cannot do without you."

Nearer Ingram draws, that demon within his bosom growing more unrestrainable—nearer he draws till both his arms are round her, with a clasp of wild, despairing love. His lips touch hers for the first time, for the last time, with lingering tenderness. Love thrills through him at that touch, and he knows then as he has never known before how much he has given her. His arms fall to his sides. He stands before her upright, rigid.

"Now send me from you with words of freezing scorn that you know so well how to use," he says

tremulously, not looking at her. "I have dared all and lost all." His voice is quivering with suppressed emotion. "After you have trampled my heart under your feet, now cast it from you as a worthless thing. My God! have you no drop of pity in your heart, that you can stand immovable and see a human heart suffer as you must know I suffer?"

"No, I do not stand immovable and see you suffer. You have moved me as I never thought I could be moved."

Ingram looks at her mutely. There is such tenderness in her tone that he hardly understands.

"I wish I could give you now what I know you deserve, a true, deep love, such as I know you have given me. I told you once that if I ever changed you were the only man whose sympathy I could accept. Now, again I promise, and I cannot promise more, if in three years' time you are the same—if your love is the same for me—then—then it shall be as you wish."

Ingram almost falls at her feet. Then, having gained so much, manlike, he murmurs: "Three years, three long years! Must it be three years?"

"If you are the same," Valarie replies calmly. "But if you should change and care for some other woman, then you are free, utterly free. It is no engagement, because you are to let yourself care for any woman that you feel might give you more than I do."

"And if you should care for anyone in those years?"

"That is not likely. I shall never care for any man so much as I care for you. I am quite sure of this," answers Valarie with decision.

"I don't know what to say," says Ingram, almost humbly. "Three years will seem an eternity to wait, but they will be three years of hope, and that is better than a lifetime of hopelessness. God knows I bless you for this sweet consideration. And if you should care more for someone in these years than for me, then you, too, must be free to do as you please without feeling yourself fettered by this promise to me."

"I shall not care for anyone," repeats Valarie. "I have said that certainly, and I know myself. And will you be satisfied with only this great liking that I have given you? Will you be satisfied with just this, and nothing more, if at the end of the time I have only this to give you, and no warmer feeling?"

"Yes," replies Ingram slowly. "I would rather that from you than the deepest love of any other woman. Oh, Valarie, I cannot tell you in words how much I bless you for this new hope. It is all too strange, and too glorious. God helping me, I will prove to you some day how truly I thank you now. And the hope will live with me that you will learn to give me something as deep as I have given you. There is the life of love in my heart now, instead of the death of hope."

For one moment he takes her hand and holds it in a lingering clasp, and then, without another word, he turns and goes from her with hope flooding his heart and running over in a great, full tenderness to everything, a tenderness such as he has never known before.

As Ingram leaves Valarie, she murmurs to herself almost a little sadly, "Only three years in which to work with unrestricted freedom."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE sun is just rising, making every dewdrop a gleaming diamond. Gabrielle is not usually a very early riser, but she has risen this morning with longing to be out in the fresh, cool, morning air, and to see the sun rise—to watch the birth of this new day. She has walked on without any definite idea of where she is going. Presently she comes to a field that is covered with those spider's webs of dewy diamonds only seen early in the morning on the grass. She crosses the stile, and after walking on for some time, she notices in the field, some distance off, a man and dog. As she approaches a little nearer she distinguishes Harold Argent with his dog, Fides. She knew Mrs. Argent had been expecting him, but she did not know that he had already arrived. There was no mistaking that great form which towered above all men, the powerful build of that young giant, the easy, indolent motion that characterized every movement.

Gabrielle moves towards the shelter of the hedge. Some feeling prompts her to wish not to be seen. She has not seen Harold once in these last two years, not since she last saw him and promised that not a day should pass without remembering him in her prayers. Many feelings and many doubts are sweeping through her heart and brain at this moment.

Mrs. Argent has not been well for some time, and

Gabrielle would give anything to see him alone and give him a few words of warning, but she does not know how to do it. Something holds her back. She cannot go to him and speak freely. Two years bring many changes. In some hearts love has grown cold in that time, in other hearts even friendship has died out. He has been her friend once, but she cannot tell whether he still cares for that friendship. He has never been near to her since that day they parted in the little fern bower room at the "Fernery." But faithfully, like a true friend, she has kept her promise made to him that day.

Harold has a gun over his shoulder. Gabrielle finds herself watching him with much curiosity. Presently he stops under a tree. He looks down at Fides and points to a spot under the tree near to the root. He is too far away for Gabrielle to hear what he says, but she pauses in her walk now and earnestly watches Harold's movements under the tree. For a moment he bends over the dog, then he rises slowly, and turns away his head. Fides fawns at his feet, as if entreating his notice; but Harold moves away with his head averted, without even glancing in her direction. Again he pauses and seems to say something. Fides remains still for some seconds, then, with something almost like solemnity in her action, she drops her head and walks to the tree, where she remains standing motionless. Her head is still down. Then, as if to attract his attention, she gives a short bark. Harold turns and looks at her. Down goes the dog's head, this time till it touches the ground. Again Harold turns away his

head, almost with something like reverence. Then calmly he loads his gun, raises it, and points it at Fides. But as his eye takes in the dog, standing there so motionless, the gun drops to the ground and he turns and walks away abruptly.

Still Fides never stirs. Sharply Harold turns, picks up the gun, points it at the dog, and fires! There is a sharp report. Fides throws her head up into the air and falls on her side. Gabrielle holds her breath. Then Harold drops on to a log near to him and covers his face with his hands.

Gabrielle draws nearer. She can hear from where she is a deep sob break from him, as if his great heart had burst. At this sound Fides moves uneasily. Then with her last remaining strength she begins to crawl in the direction of that sound. She gets to Harold, crawling along the ground with strange, uncertain movements. She falls at his feet. Still those sobs continue. Fides raises her head, and with a low, canine moan, she begins licking the hand that has just given her her death-wound.

Oh, great and mysterious love that without understanding the reason of that act can still turn and with faithful love lick the hand which has just taken her little life of true devotion. Great tears are falling slowly from Gabrielle's eyes.

Harold starts as the dog's warm tongue touches his hand. Then he falls on his knees beside her. Bending down he raises Fides in his great arms, and so, with her head resting on his breast, she gives a last little moan and dies.

Afresh break forth those low sobs as Harold caresses and holds to his heart for the last time that beautiful, tawny head. She has been his faithful friend for so many years, and now she dies forgiving him. With her last breath, she has crawled to him to lick his hand with love—the hand which had just dealt her death-blow.

Gabrielle draws nearer still. She is almost standing beside him now. Harold does not look at her once, but he knows she is beside him, without even seeing her. Then he rises from the ground, and so they both stand silently looking down on the dog lying before them.

Harold sees something bright fall and glisten on poor Fides, now still forever. "It had to be done," he says at last, with an effort. "She was badly bitten last week by a dog that went mad yesterday." Then, after a pause: "What a fool you must think me! But it was hard—you don't know how hard. She has been such a true friend to me for so many years. And now to die in this way by my hand! Oh, God, all the little I had has been taken from me! I suppose you cannot understand it. It must seem to you such a little thing, only the loss of a dog. But to me—I have lost my friend. I meant to take her away with me this time, and now—"

Gabrielle remains silent, but she stands there beside him for some time.

There is something strangely soothing to Harold in the way she just stands silently beside him. Then she only looks at him and holds out her hand. But oh!

the full-felt sympathy in that touch—a touch that said infinitely more than any uttered words. Her very presence calms him after all he has just gone through. He has not stood beside her for two years, and what an age those years seem to him now as he stands there. He almost wishes at this moment that he could change places with poor Fides, lying there so motionless. Rest is what he is ever craving now—the rest of death—rest from his thoughts! For that idea of a great blot of uncleanness resting upon him has never left him in these years. He has dwelt upon that idea till it has colored all his life.

“The truest friend I ever had,” breaks from Harold mournfully as he gazes at Fides lying there, and then he kneels down and touches with hungering tenderness the beautiful silky coat of his lost friend. “I think there are few friendships more faithful than the friendship of a faithful dog.”

Gabrielle speaks softly, bending down, too, and with loving touch stroking the lifeless dog. “But do not say the truest friend. Does the true friendship of years from early childhood count as nothing to you?”

He is silent. No word comes from him. But he could kneel down and worship her as the one bright inspiration that has kept his heart and soul alive with pure life these long years. Then he speaks.

“Perhaps if you knew all, you, too, would turn from me! Perhaps you, too, would shun me.”

“You do not believe that. Honestly, you could not say that you believe this of me. You do not believe my friendship is such a worthless thing?”

"No," he answers humbly. "I do not believe it."

Gabrielle has some wild flowers in her hand, and these she places tenderly on poor Fides. Harold turns quickly and moves away. Gabrielle never knows in this life that one of those flowers is treasured through a lifetime as one of the most sacred things this world holds to Harold. And Harold never knows in this life the prayer which consecrated those flowers as they were placed on his lost friend.

Some time after Gabrielle joins Harold in the lane, and together they walk to Mrs. Argent's cottage.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"You know Lord Lithmore?" They are standing in the garden as Harold puts this question to Gabrielle.

She answers carelessly, watching Mrs. Argent as she gently moves about the garden cutting flowers for her. She never goes from Mrs. Argent without a flower. Even in the middle of winter Mrs. Argent always has a flower for Gabrielle.

"Yes, I know him very well. He has been constantly at the Grange this last year. Valarie's aunt is very fond of him. He is very musical, you know, and admires Valarie immensely."

Harold looks at Gabrielle keenly for a moment.

"Don't pick any more flowers for me, mamma. You are too generous and too good to me altogether."

There is nothing strange in Gabrielle's calling Mrs. Argent "mamma," because she has done so ever since she was a child, but it strikes Harold with quite a new joy at this moment, and then that joy brings with it instantly a sharp pain.

"He is very good, very pious, and all that sort of thing, isn't he?"

"Who? Lord Lithmore? Yes, he is good. Life is to him no mere scene of pleasure, something out of which to squeeze all possible enjoyment," Gabrielle says a little dreamily. Then, looking up, she catches Harold's eyes fixed on her with a look that makes her flush slightly. There is something in his face at that

moment that reminds her strongly of Lord Lithmore, and an old thought comes back to her.

"It is not hard for some people to be good," Harold says presently, with a degree of bitterness in his tone that cuts Gabrielle to the heart. "Some people in this world seem to have everything made easy for them. They can hardly help being good, and," continues Harold, "they obtain with scarcely an effort what some other poor wretch would give his life's blood to win."

These words are wholly unintelligible to Gabrielle. She is quite in the dark as to the rumor that Lord Lithmore is in love with her and that she is the attraction that brings him so often to their neighborhood. But this report has not only reached Harold's ears, but he has already heard all the desirability of such a match for Gabrielle coolly discussed by more than one individual. He has heard again and again all the enormous advantage it would be to Gabrielle to marry a man like Lord Lithmore. More than once Harold has had to get out of the room as fast as he could, afraid lest the thoughts seething within him would spring to words.

How can people always know exactly what is most appropriate in such a case for both parties? Have they never any doubt that there may be an inner inappropriateness which is simply invisible to their common human eye? Is it only a matter of position and worldly suitability? Have the sympathies nothing to do in this life-long linking of soul to soul? Such thoughts as these spring to life in poor Harold's heart.

Now, as Gabrielle stands there before him, Harold tries in some measure to accustom himself to the thought, "Why should Gabrielle not marry Lord Lithmore?" He never doubts Gabrielle for one moment. If she should marry him it is because she loves and honors him, not from any thought of worldly advantage. Harold is as sure of this as he is sure that Gabrielle is the truest and purest woman, besides his little mother, that he has ever known.

Mrs. Argent gives Gabrielle the most charming bunch of flowers that it is possible to gather in her lovely little garden. "Dear child," she says in her gentle way, "they are not half sweet enough for you," and she kisses Gabrielle, with a sadness in her manner that Gabrielle does not understand.

Gabrielle turns and looks at Harold, but he does not or will not see the look. Then Harold opens the gate and passes out with her.

"Now," says Gabrielle joyfully, "I mean to enjoy my walk."

Harold looks at her curiously and then answers gloomily. "I, too, could once say, 'Now I mean to enjoy this or that,' but to be able to say that one must be free from the black shadow of sin."

"One never can be free from that shadow—it rests on all of us."

"Yes, but there are some sins that cast a blacker shadow than others, and it is hard that that shadow should fall on the innocent."

"Yes," says Gabrielle softly, "it does seem hard, and yet I suppose there is scarcely a human creature

in this world who has not by some act or influence cast a shadow over the life of another."

"Do you really believe that?" Harold says, with something like the dawn of a new light coming into his face.

"How can we believe anything else? Are we not told that 'the sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children'?"

Harold winces, and his heart grows bitter. "Do you really believe I have cast some dark shadow over some life on earth?"

Gabrielle is keenly conscious that he is suffering. She hesitates lest she should add one feather's weight more of suffering to an already bruised spirit. "I am sure you never have consciously, but do you feel that it is impossible you might do so when you look within?"

Harold is silent. He knows only too well how bitter his feelings of hatred are to someone on earth.

"Is not this lovely?" and Gabrielle holds up a tiny buttercup, with its heart overwhelmed with dawn which she has just picked. She is terribly afraid now of a confession of self-conviction from Harold, for she knows all his generosity to its very depths. She knows all this bitterness of his has sprung from a sensitive feeling of cruel injustice.

As Harold bends down to gaze into the yellow heart of that buttercup, someone drives rapidly by them.

"Who is that?" Harold asks sharply, but with intuitive knowledge as to who it is that has just raised his hat to Gabrielle as he dashes past them.

"Lord Lithmore," Gabrielle does not look up from the buttercup as she answers, for she guesses what is passing in his mind. And as Harold looks at her he thinks he knows what is passing in her mind, for with one look he has taken in all Lord Lithmore's noble bearing and handsome face. And that pang of jealousy is so strong that even his feeling of having been bitterly wronged is lost in jealous pain. The rest of the walk is continued almost in silence, till Gabrielle reaches the Fernery, where they part.

Harold returns and mourns over his lost friend with real grief.

Weeks after, when Gabrielle revisits the spot where poor Fides had breathed her last, a beautiful little willow has been planted on the spot, and carefully enclosed.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Who was that young giant who was with you this morning when I dashed past you in that horribly wild manner, Miss Amethyst?" They are all playing tennis at the Grange when Lord Lithmore puts this question to Gabrielle.

Valarie, who is standing by, smiles and answers the question. "We have only one giant in our neighborhood, a Mr. Argent. I did not know that he was at home now. Has he been at home long, Gabrielle?"

"Only a few days," Gabrielle answers, as she receives a ball with a beautiful, calm precision that makes them exclaim.

"Perhaps he would have joined our little party to-day. I wish I had known that he was at home. He is our champion tennis player, Lord Lithmore," this from Valarie.

"He would not have come, I think," Gabrielle returns quietly; "for Mrs. Argent has not been well lately, and he never leaves her for any length of time if she is not well. Harold is only here for a few days."

Lord Lithmore looks at Gabrielle while she is speaking, and notes with a strange feeling at his heart that she speaks of this young giant as "Harold." Gabrielle hands him a ball at that moment, and as her hand touches his an electric shock passes through his whole being, and he knows himself then—he knows that no other human being will ever have the power

to make every fibre in his body thrill through and through with such intense power.

Lord Lithmore is young, enthusiastic, and has the name of being a terrible Radical. He stands almost alone in the world, as both his father and mother are dead and he has never known a brother or sister. Why should he not win for himself what he now realizes in his heart he cares more about than anything on earth? He watches Gabrielle now as he has never watched her before. She is very fond of tennis and plays well. She looks rather pale to-day, and very often a far-away, anxious look creeps into her face. Lord Lithmore wonders what the thought can be that brings such sadness into that face.

The game is over, and they are all dispersing.

"I am driving in your direction. Will you let me drive you home, Miss Amethyst?" There is a low earnestness in Lord Lithmore's tone as he asks this question that is not lost on Valarie, if it is on Gabrielle.

"Yes, dear, do drive home; you look tired," says Valarie, with her usual thoughtful care for her friend. And so Gabrielle allows herself to be handed into the phaeton, for she is rather tired.

They have barely started when Lord Lithmore says: "You hold one of your meetings to-night, do you not, Miss Amethyst?"

"Yes, but how did you know?"

"Because I have been to the last three."

Gabrielle looks up. There is only surprise in her look, but she looks down quickly, and a very faint color tinges her cheeks. There is something in his

eyes as they meet hers not to be mistaken. There is no surprise in his look, it is simply one of undisguised admiration. "I must say something to you now, M. Amethyst," he goes on rapidly and a little excited. "Don't think me presumptuous, but I have learned to care for you with all the strength—"

"Don't," she says hastily, putting out her hand with a gesture of entreaty, "please don't say any more. You have made me very unhappy."

"Why?" he asks, a little tremulously; "why should it make you unhappy, my caring for you?"

"Because it is so impossible for me to return it in any way," she says gently but firmly. "And, and—care too much—I mean I reverence you too much. I do not to suffer if I have brought you pain in any way. Forgive me if I have hurt you!"

"Hurt me!" he exclaims. "It has grown the strongest, the dearest wish of my heart. It can only be a lifelong wish, and a lifelong pain if it cannot be granted." he says slowly, like one trying to put off his death sentence.

"No, it can never be. I suppose it is my fault in some way." And she thinks it is her fault that she is driving with him now. Perhaps others have seen that he cares for her. What if Harold Argers should hear anything that should make him think so. And then her thoughts can go no further at this moment. It is the first time that any man has spoken of love to her, and she feels as if it was all wrong and that she must be to blame somewhere. And so it always seems to every true woman whose heart is untouched by any feeling of responsive love.

"But why should it be so impossible?" he pleads. "If you think I might not sympathize with you in your work, you are mistaking me. I sympathize with you most heartily. I know what others say, but you must know that I grieve over the spiritual blindness that can see anything but a desire to follow in our Master's footsteps. 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me.'" more earnestly he continues, "Miss Amethyst, it is just this devotion of yours to this work among the suffering that has drawn me to you."

Gabrielle looks up quickly, and Lord Lithmore catches and holds forever that look of deep glowing understanding. These words of his could not fail to touch Gabrielle, after all the opposition she has met, after all the unjust remarks that have been made from time to time.

"Thank you for saying that, but I did not misjudge you by supposing that you did not sympathize with me in my endeavor to lessen in the smallest degree some of the suffering in the world. But my answer to your words was given because I knew it was impossible to give you what you deserve, what I pray may be given to you by some true, good woman some day. I have not got it to give you, and that is just simply all I can say."

"Is there no hope for me in the future?" he urges. "Do you think you could never learn to care enough?"

"No, in all tenderness I say it, it can never be possible. Forgive me, and forget what has passed."

"I have nothing to forgive. It is you who must for-

give me for my presumption. But forget I never can. I never can forget that I care for you, that I love and reverence you above all women," and his voice falters. But he is too thoughtful for her comfort to say another word after this, and for the moment the drive is continued in silence.

Lord Lithmore hands her from the carriage with the gentlest care when they arrive at her home. She tries to look her thanks, for she dare not trust her voice to speak. She sees nothing but acute suffering in his handsome, manly face. She tries to speak, but only a sob breaks from her, and she turns with a hopeless feeling and leaves him standing there looking after her and longing to follow her, and to crave pardon for having brought tears into those beautiful, sad eyes. And he knows as he drives away that he only loves her more deeply than before she had told him it was hopeless.

Gabrielle goes straight to her father, who is immersed in books, and unburdens her heart to him. And he takes her—literally takes her to his breast—for with her face hidden on his shoulder she confides all to him, as daughters seldom confide to their fathers. He gives her a very ready sympathy, and listens to all she says with hardly a comment. It is not till she has blamed herself, that he says gently:

"If you are sure it cannot be, then, my darling, you must not distress yourself. As to its being your fault, I cannot see that, unless it is your fault that people cannot help loving you for your sweetness. Poor fellow," continues Mr. Amethyst, "I am sorry for him;

he is one of the finest, manliest young fellows I have met for some time. But, my darling, if you are sure it cannot be, then you must not distress your sensitive heart with the thought that it is your fault." And Mr. Amethyst kisses his daughter with great tenderness.

Gabrielle goes upstairs and gets ready for her Friday night's meeting. She never knows who watched her that night and listened to her every word with greedy attention. But her words fell into the hearts of two men for whom they certainly were not intended. They take root that night in those hearts, and long after the fruit is borne.

As Gabrielle goes to bed, tired, dispirited, feeling as if she had failed in everything—and with herself most of all—some words of Lord Lithmore's come to her, and she falls asleep wondering a little whether he was there this night.

CHAPTER XX.

"Oh, do not leave me alone—most precious mother!" As Harold speaks there is in his voice the appeal of a child. "I have no one but you, do not leave me by myself."

"My poor boy!" laying her hand caressingly on his broad shoulder. "I would that it might be God's will that I had not to leave you now, not till I could see my boy was happier. But God's will must be done, and His will must be best in all things. Harold! Harold! my child, try to forgive, live to forgive."

"I will try for your sake, mother, I will try." Even in those words there is a ring of bitterness.

"If ever you should be brought in contact with your brother, remember your promise to me."

Mrs. Argent knows her boy, and she knows that it is useless now to appeal to him in any way but through his love for her.

"I hope to heaven it may never be! Oh, mother, do you do understand?"

"Great loving heart, I do understand. But remember, Harold, remember he is your brother—nothing can undo that."

"I want none of him, and he wants none of me. God knows I never want to see him, even! He has taken all, everything! I have nothing, not even a name!"

"Oh, my boy!"

And then Harold's arms are round the frail little

figure, and with great drops gathering on his forehead he murmurs hoarsely, "Oh, little mother, I promise you, if it should be necessary, I will give my life for him. Only say, now, once again, 'Harold, my boy!'" and his great form seems rent with the sob that breaks from him.

The light that comes into the dying face now expresses more glorious content than any uttered words. Her hand rests softly on his head as he remains kneeling beside her. With new strength of voice, presently the failing spirit murmurs: "I know it seems hard, but God will teach you in time. He will open your eyes. No one can tear open the spiritual eyes of the soul and make them see the light. Many of us think we can, in our wonderful presumption and self-sufficiency. The soul's eyes must open themselves, God alone helping, and look upon that light of lights. With the light of the other world shining in upon me, I see now that the Great Teacher gives to each of us some life-lesson to learn. My lesson has been to repair—to mend the rent made by a great wrong. Your lesson, I think, oh, son of my heart, is to learn that which only a great and noble soul can learn beautifully—forgiveness. Yes, I understand that because of your intense sensitiveness, it will be no easy lesson to learn. God help you!"

The young, strong arms tighten their hold round the frail, feeble form: he clings to her with something of fierce tenacity in his clinging. She has been his "all" from earliest childhood. He has always shared his sorrows and his joys with her, and now she is being torn from him.

Some hours after Gabrielle came in. She has been with Mrs. Argent constantly since she has been ill. It has been an agonizing joy to Harold to have her so often near to him. He is only too conscious of how much he is learning to depend upon her, and he almost curses himself for his folly.

The moment Gabrielle enters, Mrs. Argent knows it, and a new light creeps into her sightless eyes. She knows that her hours are numbered, and her heart is trembling for her boy, left to himself with his heart bursting with bitter feeling as to his hard, lonely lot. Harold is not in the room when Mrs. Argent calls Gabrielle to her, rousing herself from a half sleepy state into which she had fallen.

"Gabrielle, my daughter," begins the old lady earnestly, "I want to say something to you; I want to tell you something that has been on my mind for some time, but I have hardly known how to tell you. Dear, you have been as a daughter to me. I know I can trust you absolutely!"

"Yes, you can trust me, mamma. Tell me whatever you wish to tell me, and let me help you."

Gabrielle hardly knows what she is undertaking.

"I want you to promise me that you will always be a true friend to my boy."

"You do not need me to promise you that, dear," Gabrielle says tremulously, "but I do promise you always to be as true a friend as it is possible for one human being to be to another. I will always do all that is in my power for him for your dear sake, as well as for his sake." And then Gabrielle pauses, and

a faint color creeps to her face as she bends lower and whispers softly: "Mamma, will it be any comfort to you if I tell you I can never care for any man as I care for your boy?"

"God bless thee, bless thee, my little Angel. Thou hast comforted the last dying hours of a troubled heart." And there is a long but perfectly understood silence between those two. The elder woman, though dying, realized all that it had cost the younger to confess that love—she realized more than ever the spiritual beauty of Gabrielle's character, the deep tenderness of a love that seemed to forget all in her longing to comfort the dying spirit.

"He has no one but me," continues the old lady pleadingly; "he has had a cruel wrong to bear, and his heart and soul are wound up in bitterness. He is very unhappy. You will know how I feel when I tell you all, for I must confide in you. You are not like others, Gabrielle, and now, now I wish you to understand about it."

Gabrielle thought she did understand more than anyone knew.

"You have known him from childhood, dear; you know how brave and fearless he is, and you know how simple, almost childlike, he is in some things. Knowing all this, and, darling, feeling as you do, you will understand me."

Then Mrs. Argent half rises, supported by Gabrielle, and with many a sob and many a weary moan she tells Gabrielle what she has confided to no one on earth but Harold. And she tells Gabrielle some things

that she has not even told Harold. When she has finished, Gabrielle's face is hidden on Mrs. Argent's shoulder, and hot tears are falling from her eyes.

"And now," murmurs Mrs. Argent, "I can die happy. You will be his friend; you will understand him, and—and you will not love him less, dear, because—because a great sin has left its stain on him?"

"Oh, mamma, you can trust me and feel sure of me!"

"My poor, poor boy! God will give him peace in time. And you will—oh, my little Angel." Very faintly now the words are breathed. "Gabrielle, do not leave me to-night, for it cannot be long before I must leave him; and I should like to feel that you will be with him in those first moments when he finds himself all alone. Call him to me now, darling, for we have not much time to be together. Do not cry, my child. I am feeling nothing now but a great rest. God bless you! I have had much happiness in this life, but I have had much grief and weariness, too. Is there any life, I wonder, that is not full of trouble and sorrow?"

Gabrielle goes to Harold, and after sending him to his mother, she writes a few lines to her father and tells him she will not return to him that night. When she goes back to Mrs. Argent, Harold is supporting her in his strong arms. One glance tells her all. She sees that already the spirit is going through its final struggle before casting off its fleshly covering. Harold's face is terribly pale and drawn, but with infinite tenderness he holds that silver-haired head on his breast.

"Is Gabrielle there?" she asks presently, opening her eyes. "Kiss me, darling—God bless you! He has blessed you," she murmurs.

Gabrielle rises and kisses those lips fast growing cold from the kiss of death. Nothing can ever obliterate from her memory that last picture of Mrs. Argent, held in Harold's arms. Beautiful, calm old age supported by powerful youth.

"Oh, my boy! my boy!" she whispers, "speak to me! Tell me you will be brave. I know you will miss me, but you will feel me near to you often."

"Dearest, I can only feel at this moment how little I have deserved all your true devotion, all that more than mother's love that you have poured out upon me. I only feel how ill I have requited it all." Harold's voice dies away in a hoarse whisper.

"Put your face near to mine. Listen to me, darling. In all the relationships of life nothing has been sweeter or more beautiful to me than what your life and love have brought to me. I can see your face now." The dying voice is growing very faint. "Thank God for that! It was a sore grief to me when He shut out the light from me, and the light of your face. Not since you were a baby have I seen you!" And now a strange, new light shines in the beautiful, white face.

Whether she really sees him or not, matters little. She believes she does, and a holy joy fills her at having once more looked upon the face of her boy before leaving him.

There is a long silence in that chamber of death.

Gabrielle rises presently and almost leads Harold

away. "O, God, I am alone!" he gasps, as he goes forth from the presence of the dead.

"No, you are never alone. Oh, Harold, for her sake, be brave; she has indeed loved you with a love passing the love of mothers. She gave up all for you. Oh, let it not have been in vain!"

Harold looks at Gabrielle. "You know all?" he says, with something of relief in his voice.

"Yes, she told me all, and told me to tell you."

Gabrielle comes nearer, and gently lays her hand on his arm. "Will you let me always be your friend?"

He looks away from her.

"I promised her I would always be your friend, and I mean it. But how can I keep that promise if you will not let me, Harold?"

"You are very good," he says slowly, like one in a dream. "I never can thank you for all that you have been to us these last few weeks. But I know you could not be otherwise. I know you—yes, I know you better than—" He stops. She is very good, he tells himself, and he accepts it all as it is meant, but no more. No, he does not misunderstand her. Is she not good and kind to everyone, to all alike? And he allows that last word *alike* to stab him. No, he will not allow any false hope to deceive him.

"I am going to send papa to stay with you for a few days," Gabrielle says, as she leaves Harold.

"Thank you, if your father would come to me. I could not bear the sight of anyone else at this moment, but your father is like no other person."

And this is the last time that Gabrielle sees Harold

for a long time, for instantly after the funeral he leaves without a word to anyone. Gabrielle's heart is very sore about her friend; and how is she keeping her promise to Mrs. Argent, she constantly asks herself. Where has he gone? What is he doing?

CHAPTER XXI.

"I wish," says Valarie, thoughtfully, "that I could make a true estimate of my musical powers—just take a correct measure of my talent for music, and know how much it really is."

Valarie is talking to Gabrielle in her special sitting-room. A very charming room it is. Her piano is there, and books on all subjects. Flowers are scattered over the room in pots and vases.

Valarie has just published another of her melodious morceaux, and it has been received by the Harmonic Society with warm approval. No small meed of praise has been lavished on it, and it has been performed at many of the large concerts.

"I think you are wishing an impossibility," Gabrielle answers. "Another might do it to a certain degree; only to a certain degree, though. I am sure we never can measure ourselves in any way. We may feel the spark of genius burn within us, but we never can tell how much real fire is there. We can but work and leave the true measurement of that genius to time. There is a spurious sort of genius that flashes forth at times and then dies out as utterly as if it had never lived. Time, which breathes into the true a renewal of life, is the grave of much counterfeit genius! It takes more than a lifetime to prove that real genius cannot die. Shakespeare and Michael Angelo will never die.

Time rather adds lustre to their fame. Shakespeare is better known in our age than in his own. Beethoven and Mozart will live through all ages. They breathed out their life in music and that life will never be extinguished in silence.

"You think, then, we never can know or measure how much genius we possess?" Valarie is softly pacing the room as she speaks.

"Yes, I think we none of us ever know ourselves. 'Know thyself' is indeed the acme of wisdom, for only hereafter can we ever know as we are known."

"If there is anything to know then," Valarie answers in a tone of hopelessness. "I wonder if there is anything to be learned hereafter? Shall I be able to continue my musical labors then? Ah, if I could only think that. How happy I should be if, after leaving this life, I could still work at and enjoy music in that after life in which so many believe. Ah, Gabrielle! I wish I could believe as you do. It must be very beautiful to feel so sure, as I know you do. It must be so restful!"

Valarie is still walking up and down in a restless way. She has not been well for some time, and as she continues this incessant walking up and down the room, Gabrielle looks at her anxiously. She has grown decidedly thinner, but her aunt says it is because she is always working so hard. She never allows herself to rest. Valarie is looking more beautiful than ever, Gabrielle thinks. Presently she throws up her arms with an almost hopeless gesture. "The end of all things is the same everywhere," she

says, in a clear, sweet voice, seating herself at the piano, whence she brings forth strains more mournful than any words. Tears spring to Gabrielle's eyes at every wail of despair that Valarie sends forth. Gabrielle knows she is playing as she feels, and her heart is moved with tender compassion for this friend of hers. She is conscious that Valarie's soul is appealing to her in its dire distress, in a musical language thrillingly pathetic. And as Gabrielle sits there, she answers this appeal by appealing to the Friend who is closer than brother or human friend. She prays that her friend may know that peace which passeth knowledge. And as Gabrielle prays, a beautiful consciousness takes possession of her that the Great Diviner of all hearts understands and is leading this wandering spirit to that Light which lighteth all men. It is one of the truest joys in life to Gabrielle to follow her friend into these musical regions of sweetness and sadness.

Valarie knows this, and she plays for Gabrielle as for no one else. And she confides in Gabrielle absolutely. Gabrielle feels all the responsibility of such confidence, and she gives Valarie the yearning love almost of a mother for a child, although Valarie is some years older than she is. It is impossible to know Valarie without loving her, but very few know her as Gabrielle and her brother Ingram. They have grown up together as children, and Gabrielle never wonders at Ingram's devotion to her. There is a charm about her every movement, and a play of the imaginary powers of mind that is strangely captivating.

Valarie does not play very long, and when she rises she takes a stool, and, placing it at Gabrielle's feet, seats herself there, resting her head on Gabrielle's knee.

This touches Gabrielle, for she knows how self-contained Valarie always is. There is no streak of "gush" in Valarie's composition. She loves few, but where she gives her love it is strong and true as steel.

"Your playing was wonderful, dear," Gabrielle murmurs, gently stroking her beautiful dark hair. "You do not know how much I enjoy it. I feel as if it were wrong to enjoy it all by myself—to allow so much thrilling sweetness to be lavished on me! Yes, dearest, you certainly have genius. I have no doubt of that. It is a glorious gift, a rich possession. But why did you stop so soon?"

Valarie looks up with a smile. Gabrielle's praise is sweet to her, perhaps the sweetest thing in life. She is strangely indifferent to the praise of strangers, and cares about it only in so far as it tells her truly whether her work is good. She knows Gabrielle's praise is true. Then the smile dies away from her face, and she says sadly: "I love your praise, Gabrielle; it is sweeter to me than anything. But, darling, it is all useless—I mean all my work, all my effort to achieve something great. I am going to tell you what I could breathe to no one else. I have felt it for some time. Gabrielle, life is ended for—for me. I know it, yes, I have no doubt of it now. But I have told this presentiment to no one but you."

There is a long pause. Gabrielle hardly knows what to say. Anyone else might have tried to combat this

presentiment as an absurd fancy, but not so Gabrielle. She knows there is a knowledge not of this world, and what if Valarie in some mysterious way has been warned? She is afraid to speak. She only touches and strokes Valarie's hair with a new-born tenderness.

"Darling, what do you mean?"

"I mean simply that I know I have not long to live. I cannot tell you how I know it, but I do know it more certainly than I know anything in life. My life is coming to an end."

Gabrielle puts her arms round her, and her tears are falling fast on the brown head resting on her knee.

"Oh," continues Valarie, with the deepest earnestness in her tone, "oh, if it might only be that I could finish first this glorious thought which I am thinking out now and working hard upon. Oh, why can I not urge my brain to work faster, to think faster!"

Valarie rises from her seat with a new energy, and begins pacing the room again in her former restless way. "If I could but complete this theme, and weave into it one rich, grand harmony, then I would die contentedly. But to leave this, perhaps in its unfinished state, is dreadful to me. To die before the birth of my unborn child makes death terribly hard! Oh, Gabrielle! Gabrielle!"

This cry pierces Gabrielle's heart. Valarie is appealing to her for help, and how is she to help this soul bound up in its own bonds of beautiful imageries? Valarie has given her life solely to these musical thoughts, and now they are giving her no rest. This

art which she has alone worshipped—to which she has sacrificed everything—is now lashing her with tormenting fears. She cannot dispossess herself of this all-absorbing hope, for which she has lived and labored so many years—the hope of giving to the world a musical gem which shall never be lost in the grave of time. This hope has grown so strong that at last it has become almost a belief, and now to cast this belief from her, or to give it up, is like tearing out her right eye and casting it from her. This right eye has become more precious to her than her whole life, inconceivable as it may seem.

Presently Valarie pauses in her walk and looks at Gabrielle. Instantly she moves towards her; for there is a look of mute suffering in Gabrielle's eyes that Valarie cannot resist. "You have eyes like no one." And Valarie bends down and kisses her friend on the eyes. But she cannot kiss away that look. "You have eyes that seem to weep unshed tears. Do you know, when I am far away from you sometimes, I am haunted by your eyes?"

Gabrielle smiles on her friend, but her heart is too full to utter any meaningless word.

"You have been a true friend to me," Valarie goes on, tremulously. "I wonder I am not better than I am. Don't, Gabrielle, darling," as she feels a tear fall on her hand. "I am not troubled, I feel almost prepared for anything—anything but leaving my work unfinished." Then very earnestly: "It does seem strange, Gabrielle, that we have so little to do with our own lives. Life seems to me like something lent to us

for a time, and then taken from us whenever it pleases the Supreme Lawgiver. My own life is to me a curiosity. I look upon my end with more wonderment than fear—with a good deal of awe."

"You are right, dear; our life is only something given to us to use for a time for the Supreme Lawgiver. But He does not take it back just when it pleases Him. I believe each life is finally perfect and complete in itself. It must be so, for He has said, 'Ye are God's.' It rests with each of us as to whether our life will be here. We have to work out our own salvation in fear and trembling. I think if we could only grasp this verse in its entirety we could not recklessly play with our lives as we do, 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?' Oh, Valarie, I can only humbly believe that even those lives that seem to us wasted and lost lives, are in God's sight only the beginning of lives to be purified and perfected hereafter. It is given to us here to perfect and purify our lives. But if we ourselves will not do it here, then this work of purifying will have to be done hereafter. God is a consuming fire, and we must go through the fire till all our dross is consumed and our gold made beautiful and bright. 'And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.' Now, we only see the beginning of some lives, and most awful are those beginnings sometimes. A pure life, a free life is offered to us here, but we turn from that free,

gracious offer, and choose the bondage of sin, and the impure, and die in our sins. We do not see the end, as we call it; we see only the beginning. 'Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.' For 'the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.' "

"Oh, Gabrielle, dear friend! pray for me. Your God will hear you when perhaps He will not hear me."

Gabrielle clasps her hand. "My God would not be less tender to you than to me," she murmurs, "or He would not be the God I love so dearly. Do you think He loves you and yearns over you less tenderly than I do?"

"Gabrielle, promise me that if I send for you you will come to me. It is a strange thing to say, but at this moment I feel as if I were resting my whole spirit upon you. If you cannot help me, then no one can."

"I promise, darling, to come to you whenever you send for me. But there is One who can help you as I can not; I want you to remember these words, 'I was brought low, and he helped me. Return unto thy rest, oh, my soul.' Only believe that He wants to help you."

CHAPTER XXII.

"MY DEAR GABRIELLE,—I am in great distress. Will you come to us at once? Valarie has been thrown from her horse and dreadfully hurt. She keeps asking for you. I send the carriage with this letter to you, for I know you will come to us if it is possible. You love Valarie and understand her.

"Your affectionate friend,

"CAROLINE COURTNEY."

Gabrielle reads this letter, which she has just received from Valarie's aunt, again and again. She has a bewildered feeling as she remembers her last conversation with Valarie some weeks ago. Then she goes to her father and gives him Lady Courtney's letter. "Papa," she says, resting her head on his shoulder, "life is all so strange. I feel now as if God were giving me a lesson too hard for me to learn. I cannot master it. I cannot even begin to understand it. I feel as I have never felt in my life, as if I were drifting out to sea. Poor Valarie! my poor Ingram!" and for a few seconds she sobs on her father's breast as she has never sobbed in her life.

"My darling, you will not understand it all at once. Do we ever understand all at once any lesson given to us to learn? It may be that never in this life will you understand this lesson of absolute trust, that is now being given to you to learn." And then, with

Gabrielle's head still buried in his breast, Mr. Amethyst prays with a fervency that soothes and stills the strained anguish that is tearing Gabrielle's heart-strings.

"Dear Father, it is all too difficult for us to understand. But Thou knowest all. Dear Lord, just teach us now not to doubt Thy love. Now increase our childlike trust in Thee a thousandfold. Let us come forth from this trial—this trial as by fire—purified and strengthened throughout. Master, now take the heart of this Thy servant, my dear daughter, into Thy hand and touch it with Thy touch of healing comfort."

Gabrielle looks up with an expression of calm in her face. She can go to her friend now, strong, with a strength not of this world, and calm, with a peace that this world cannot give.

"You are going at once to Valarie?" and Mr. Amethyst looks at his daughter's pale face a little anxiously.

"Yes, instantly, the carriage is waiting for me."

"Bless you, my darling!" is all that Mr. Amethyst can say, but he goes to the door with Gabrielle and watches her till the carriage is out of sight.

When Gabrielle arrives at the Grange, Valarie's aunt meets her, and Gabrielle reads the worst in her face.

"It is dreadful!" she half moans. "There are internal injuries, the doctor says, which prevent all hope of recovery. Oh, Gabrielle, I would willingly go in her place. She does not want to die. She is young. Why could not I have been taken and Valarie left?"

Gabrielle tries to say a few words of sympathy. She knows that Valarie's aunt has loved her with very real and tender love, and Valarie has been a daughter to her.

"Go to her, Gabrielle," Lady Courtney says presently. "Go to her, dear; comfort her if you can. Somehow, I think perhaps you can."

All is still in the room save for a faint moan that comes from the figure in the bed. Gabrielle in silence kneels beside it.

"You see, my presentiment was right. Life was ended for me, as I knew," murmurs Valarie, laying her hand lovingly on Gabrielle's head. "I have been longing for you so much, dearest. I think, Gabrielle, you are my dearest. I think I love and honor you more than you do no one. Gabrielle, you will not leave me again, will you?—it will be as if I had never been."

"That could never be, Valarie!" cries Gabrielle with a sob. "Neither here nor hereafter can it ever be as if you had never been."

"They have told me there is no hope for me," and Valarie breathes heavily as she speaks. "Oh, Gabrielle, if I could only believe as you believe! But there is one thing that one does realize utterly in this near approach to death, and that is, that we are here for such a little while. Oh, Gabrielle, what does it all matter?"

"It does not matter, darling, so long as we are trying to live beautifully in making others happy."

"Oh, Gabrielle, have I made anyone happy?"

"Yes, darling, you have made many happy without

realizing it; you have lighted up and made beautiful many a life with your loving acts. It seems to me that you have been strangely unconscious of the source from whence you have drawn the cup of cold water with which you have often refreshed others."

"Yes, I have been blind. The scales are falling from my eyes, and with the light of the other world I am beginning to see what is shadow and what substance. Oh, Angel, with the light of eternity shining in my eyes now, how small everything looks that at one time seemed great and important! You have the best of it! I feel as if I had been playing with shadows and feeding on fancies. You have told of Someone—a real Person—who holds and feeds you."

There was a long pause, and Valarie breathed heavily and moaned in pain. Presently her hand sought Gabrielle's and she whispered: "Darling, have you not some precious oil in your lamp that you can give me?" And Valarie's eyes are raised with a hungry longing to her friend. "Oh, Gabrielle, you seem to cover me with peace. Your heart cries out to your God to draw me to Him. I prayed to Him this morning to give me some smallest atom of the peace which you have. Pray for me now, dearest. I think He will hear your prayer and make me feel Him, if He has not turned from me long ago and left me to myself."

"You will soon feel His love now, dear. 'Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you.' You are drawing nigh to Him now, darling, and oh, Valarie, He is very nigh to you. It is His hands of love now

that are drawing you. 'The Lord is nigh unto all that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. You have called upon Him in truth, and He has already heard you and will answer you. Do not doubt that.'

"But it is so late to call upon Him! Just when I cannot help it I go to Him. He knows all, and I know that when I could then I would not. It is only when I have nothing to give, neither time nor—"

"Darling, one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. It may be that in a few hours, or moments even, you may give Him a fuller repentance, a more beautiful love, than any love or repentance I have been trying to give Him in all these years."

"Oh, Gabrielle, your humility makes me long to rise from this bed that I may throw myself on the ground with my face to the earth! But I cannot move. I may not even humble myself as I would."

There is nothing but an agony of yearning love in the kisses with which Gabrielle covers the beautiful face before her.

"So late!" Valarie whispers.

"Yes, late for your lamp to shine brightly now for the Bridegroom, but not too late for you even now to creep to Him with His words on your lips: 'Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love.'"

"Oh, if I had only given Him that true love long ago! My heart feels so frozen now—my feelings are so benumbed, except my feeling of love for you, darling;" and Valarie's eyes are filled with a glowing light

"The thief on the cross hung there to draw you to Him, the Father of every suffering soul. Feel sure of that Father's love. You feel sure of mine."

"Yes," says Valarie softly, "I seem now just to hang on your love. I am so sure of that."

"You will soon feel sure of His love, darling."

"How can you speak so confidently, Gabrielle? After Mr. Molesworth left just now I felt hopeless, as if I were going straight to hell! It was not till you entered this room that I have felt something of peace."

Gabrielle lays her hand with infinite love on the beautiful brown hair. "Yes, I am sure, dear—sure—because I feel how much I love you; and I know He loves you infinitely more than I do. I cannot realize all the breadth and length and depth and height of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. But I, even I, with my poor, darkened understanding, do not doubt this love. Oh, God help you to feel that love which passeth knowledge, dearest. I think none of us understands in any way the breadth of this love which passeth our human knowledge. I cannot understand it. But on that love I rest myself, and know that all will be well with you. You are going from my anxious love to a love that will surround and envelop you with an everlasting tenderness infinitely beyond any that I have given you here on earth. I would to God I could make you feel as sure of this as I do! If we could only understand that love, if we could only understand some bit of it, in its deepest and

simplest sense, then how different our lives would be. How much happier we should be; we should know then, a purified happiness."

"How different my life would have been," murmured Valarie.

"Yes, very different," Gabrielle answers simply. "It would have been a happier life than it has been—a life filled with the fulness of Him that ' filleth all in all'—that is, a life on earth of living peace. That is the life of which Ruskin speaks when he says: 'The only way to life is advancing in life whose heart is getting softer, whose blood warmer, whose brain quicker, whose spirit is entering into living peace.' A life which feels its days by day being filled with 'the fulness of him that filleth all in all.'"

"Oh, Gabrielle, you make me long to feel as you feel and see as you see."

"Darling, know then that God is now working in your heart. Step by step He is leading you to Him. You would not go to Him yourself, so now, through the blackness of pain and suffering, He is drawing you to the truth in Him. Even now it is not too late for your life to shine forth with a beautiful light! Do you know these lines? They are such precious lines to me." And Gabrielle's face shines with a new light. It is as if step by step she is lighting up the way down the dark valley of the shadow of death, where sorrow must then leave her.

Valarie's eyes are gazing up into Gabrielle's face with hungry longing. Softly Gabrielle repeats:

"Night brings out stars as sorrow shows us truth.
Though many, yet they help not; bright, they light not.
They are too late to serve us, and sad things
Are aye too true. We never see the stars
Till we can see naught but them. So with truth.
And yet, if one would look down a deep well,
Even at home, we might see those same stars.
Life's more than breath, and the quick round of blood.
We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths;
In feelings, not in figures on a dial.
We should count time by heart throbs. He most lives
Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best.
Life's but a means unto an end.
Beginning mean, and end to all things—God."

"Yes," murmurs Valarie, "life's but a means unto an end; but how many of us think of using it as a means unto an end, and if we do, what sort of end is it? I did mean to use my life as a means unto an end—I thought a glorious end. And now how does that end look to me? Now as I look back at that end worked for, lived for, oh, God! how worthless it seems to me when looked at from this point of view—the end of all ends."

"No, darling, not the end of all ends. It is the end of life here, but the beginning of life immortal."

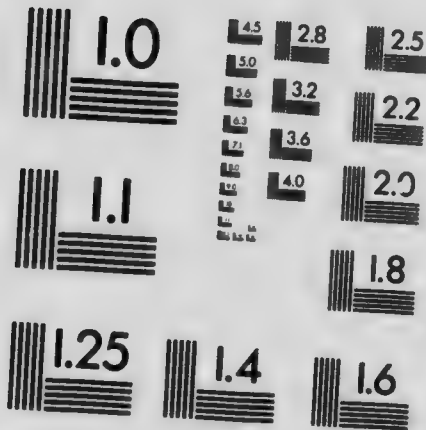
"I wish I could be sure I knew Him and loved Him here before I went elsewhere. Yet I am afraid that wish springs now out of fear rather than the pure wish to know Him that I may love Him." Doubtfully, mournfully, Valarie speaks.

"Yes, dear, but I think that fear will soon be swallowed up in a stronger feeling—love for our Master."



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"Did you ever not believe, Gabrielle?"

"Yes, dear, there was a time when I was nothing but doubts. Belief had grown so dim within me that I shuddered lest it should go out entirely and leave me in darkness. I often wonder if it is possible for any human creature to utterly disbelieve in hereafter when within him there exists the immortal spark. I don't believe it is possible for any one to believe continuously that with his death he will cease to be. For is there not implanted in all of us a witness to the truth?"

"A something within us which, even in our moments of supremest arrogance, cries out, 'What if you should be wrong?'" says Valarie thoughtfully. "Do you think that cry a sign of the witness? For you awakened that cry within me again and again, Gabrielle. If anyone can help me, you can."

"Dear, I cannot tell you how often, when I have been troubled and miserable about you, I have repeated this precious verse to myself:

"Oh, trust thyself to Jesus,
When thou art full of care
For wanderers whom thou canst not win
Our blessed hope to share:
Then is the hour for trusting
Thy Lord to bring them nigh,
Then is the time for singing,
'He loves them more than I.'"

Valarie bursts into tears, the first, perhaps, that Gabrielle has ever seen her shed. Perhaps it is more the thought of Gabrielle's anxiety for her that has touched her than the verse itself.

"Were you often anxious about me, and I never anxious about myself? How strange it is! Oh, Gabrielle, what a loyal, tender friend you have been to me? What a true love you have given me! It is not a love of earth or from earth. It must be a God-given love. Your love for me is the most beautiful thing I have ever known. How is it I have never seen all its beauty before? Things seem more real to me, somehow. No shadow of doubt crosses my mind now about your love for me. It does seem God-like, it must be God-given."

"I want you to learn this little verse for me, darling," and Valarie repeats after Gabrielle with the trustfulness of a child:

"Oh, trust thyself to Jesus
When faith is dim and weak,
And the very ore thou need'st
Thou canst not rise to seek.
Then is the hour for seeing
That He hath come to thee,
Then is the time for singing,
'His touch hath healed me.'"

"Now you must try and rest," and Gabrielle arranges the pillows for Valarie. She suffers much pain after this, and even speech becomes impossible sometimes.

All day Valarie has been suffering acutely. Gabrielle has hardly left her for a moment. Valarie is very brave, very patient; no one could have borne the pain with calmer fortitude. As Gabrielle holds a glass of water to her lips, she says faintly: "I wish you could

go with me, wherever I am going, Gabrielle. How safe I should feel then! But what a selfish thing to say—to wish," she adds hastily.

"No, it does not seem selfish to me at all. It only seems to me that you are doing me too much honor and that your trust in me is strangely great. I humbly thank God for giving me the power to help you in this way, darling."

"Don't leave me to-night, Gabrielle." And Gabrielle knows what she means. "I cannot bear the thought of anyone touching me afterwards but you, Angel."

"Darling, no one shall touch you but me."

"Will you tell Ingram from me that I wish I could have given him more? I do care for him, but not as he cares for me. I know how long and faithfully he has loved me. Do you forgive me all, Gabrielle? I could not help not loving him more. I never deceived him in any way. You know that, dear. He will tell you I never trifled with him. I was quite fair to him. I told him candidly I could not care for him as he wanted, and I begged him to feel it was impossible. Then at last, when I saw after years of faithful hope how much he really cared, I yielded and promised that in three years' time, if we felt just the same, then it should be as he wished."

"I have never known you anything but true as steel, Valarie. I could never blame you for not caring for Ingram. Never for a moment have I thought you trifled with him, poor fellow!" And it is Gabrielle who sobs now and Valarie who comforts her.

"Perhaps hereafter it may all be different, Gabrielle."

I hope so. Will you give this to your brother for me?" And Valarie gives Gabrielle a letter, addressed in faint pencil, to Ingram. "And tell him I did want to see him. I know I did not help him in life. Perhaps with my death I may help him more. I have told him, dear, that now what I have lived for looks so insignificant, so altogether childish, when looked at from the shadows of death—I have told him that it seems as if it was on you and your faith that I was resting. I have told him that it seems to me now miraculous that we can live as we do, so many of us, only interested and wholly occupied with the fleeting affairs of this life. I have thanked him for his love and I have assured him that now it looks to me beautiful with the beauty of a rare faithfulness! That faithfulness was drawing me to him." Valarie's voice grows very faint. "I have tried to tell him something of what you have been to me, dear, now—now, with the shadows closing round me."

"Is there no gleam of light through the shadows?" Gabrielle asks, with something of yearning vibrating through every soft tone.

Valarie only sighs, but her eyes are raised to Gabrielle with a new-born, wistful tenderness. "Yes, there is light, dear, and the gleam of light that shines upon me is Ingram's faithful, strong love and your most beautiful, unselfish love. Through the human love that Ingram gave, I am grasping at Him who says: 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love.' And through your tender and most strengthening love I am able to comprehend what is the breadth

and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.' through the human, something of the great beauty God is dawning upon me. If your love is so beautiful then what must His be? And I realize that love has nothing to do with any poor love of mine. Don't be disappointed in me, but this much I do know and oh, the comfort that it is to me! Is it not strange I used to feel that if I yielded to Ingram's love it would handicap me for what I wanted to accomplish in life; and now—now it is this very love that is the strong power drawing me to that infinite love. . . . What a strangely unfinished thing my life looks to me now, even that part of it in connection with my brother. I have helped him in no way. I was not even able to love him as he loved me. I have only caused him pain, and I suppose I shall cause him more pain. Will he really suffer much, Gabrielle, when he knows all?"

"You don't know Ingram or you could not ask that question. He will feel it through life."

"Oh, Gabrielle, I pray you may be wrong;" then in a wandering tone, "Do you think in my death I may help him as I have not in my life? I would bear twice the pain I am now bearing if by my suffering I could spare him. It is hard that I should only have brought pain to him. Perhaps, Gabrielle, it is because I thought I could shape my life as I pleased, after the pattern I thought most beautiful."

Gabrielle looks at her, and wonders if already her vision is growing clearer, if already she is beginning

to see things as they are and not through this glass darkly.

The morning light is beginning to steal in when Valarie says faintly: "Pray for me, Gabrielle! Pray the Father to give me strength to endure patiently to the end without a murmur. Pain has always seemed to me such a mystery. Now that I am in the midst of it, I can hardly believe it. A baptism of pain it seems to me. Is this the way the Father had to use to draw me to Him?"

"Yes, a baptism of pain that you have borne bravely, Valarie. The Father is with you—do not doubt it. Only a little while now and He will wipe all tears from your eyes. 'And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.'"

"Kiss me, Gabrielle dear, you have helped and strengthened my poor, doubting heart. When you speak now, this verse comes to me: 'In everything ye are enriched by him, in all utterance and in all knowledge.' At first I felt rebellious when I was laid here helpless, but now I am more content. I am realizing that whatever is must be best. Now I look back and wonder at myself. Why do so many of us live as if we never were going to die? I feel I leave much unsaid that I want to say to you now when the time is so short. You have been my true angel, indeed! Had I some presentiment of all you were going to be to me when I used to call you Angel years ago?"

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Valarie's aunt has just left Valarie sleeping. Gabrielle is lying on a sofa beside the bed. Suddenly she is aroused; it is only a faint whisper, but instantly she is bending over Valarie.

"Put your arms round me, Angel. Let me feel your lips warm on my face. Oh, God, is this death?" and Valarie stretches out her arms to Gabrielle like a little child. "God bless you for all your—Gabrielle"—and Gabrielle listens with strained intensity to catch that faint murmur—"pray for me—pray for me every day. . . . 'The fulness of him that filleth all things'—Gabrielle"—and with that name on her lips breathed rather than spoken, Valarie passes into another world.

And then tears rain from Gabrielle's eyes on to the beautiful, still face resting on her shoulder. "Oh, my darling! He loves you more than I," and low, bitter sobs break from Gabrielle.

No hand but Gabrielle's touches Valarie. She gave the promise and faithfully she kept it.

To Gabrielle's prayers now is added one for a doubting soul going out into the larger life.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

INGRAM, travelling on the continent for some weeks, had heard nothing about Valarie's accident and sudden death till a letter reached him from Gabrielle. When this letter reaches him he receives a blow from which—to use his own words—he can never recover.

"I will live through it," he writes to Gabrielle, "like other men who have lived through a like blow. I must live on and bear it all as others better and braver than I have borne it. But my heart no longer beats with hope; it seems to lie within my benumbed being a maimed, bleeding thing. For the last two years I have lived and breathed hope from that promise made to me that in three years' time she would give herself to me if we remained the same. She would then have become my wife—my wife. Oh, God! How hard it all seems! When I received your letter, just two years, four months and five days had passed since the day I gained that promise. I counted every hour passed almost as something removed from what separated her from me, as something swept away which kept me from the hope of my life! Not six months to live through and then, then I should have gained what I had worked for, lived for, and cared for most upon earth. And now, now it has all ended! In my own eyes I look like a hopeful fool clutching at a shadow. What is life to me now? Strange, but her death seems to have written death on every thing.

I cannot look on the face of a flower without a death written all over it! I cannot see its beauty longer—I only see that in a horribly short time it will be a thing of decay. Before a relentless fate struck me this blow, life was beautiful and sweet to me, nothing to be desired. Now, if I dared, I would rather to be taken from this world of hopeless hope. The world calls me successful, and I know myself to be one of the most miserable of men. I wonder are many like this—one moment of supreme, sweet hope, then the blackness of despair; a fair morning of glorious brightness, and then an afternoon of dark gloom? All belief in happiness seems to have been destroyed with my happiness. Is happiness always succeeded by bitter grief? Is hope always followed by bitter despair? I wonder, if we could take the lives of all of us, and analyze them, if we should find it was so. I wonder we should find that grief and despair preponderate largely over happiness and hope. That last letter she wrote when she was dying, is just the most precious thing I have in life now. She did love me, and she did give me her last thoughts—that is the only sweet drop in my cup of bitterness. That letter shows me how much she would have cared for me, and all that she would have grown to be for me. . . .

"Gabrielle, come to me now. I need you—she loved you—that is enough for me! I believe she loved you as she loved no one, but there is no bitterness in my thought, knowing you as I do. . . .

"Valarie says in her letter to me that you have

been to her what she never thought it possible for one human being to be to another, that your very presence gave her peace. Gabrielle, your brother blesses you for that love, and for all the help you were able to give to that suffering soul. Your love for her is the most beautiful thing that I can see at this moment. We will always love her, dear, just the same. We will not let her memory grow faint. At the thought of this love my grief grows less keen and my bitterness less bitter. Come to me, for I cannot come to you now—I could not bear the association. I can get nice rooms for you where I am now staying, but I will go to Paris to meet you, and then after a few days we can return here.

“I saw Harold Argent a few days ago in Paris. He is a fine fellow. No one could have expressed sympathy for me in a more delicate way. I was touched by the way in which he did it. But, poor fellow, he has some trouble of his own, for he looks terribly changed since his mother’s death. I wonder if there is any truth in that report mentioned to you some time ago, about his being related in some way to Lord Lithmore. If he has heard it, and there is any truth in it, he is the sort of fellow to feel it keenly. Whether it be true or not, I feel strangely drawn to him, for he is a noble fellow. He particularly inquired after you, and so, by the way, did Lord Lithmore, who has been staying at the Imperial Hotel in Paris for some time. I shall take a room for you there as soon as I hear you are coming, dear. Thank our father for his letter.

“Your loving brother,

“INGRAM TREMOINE.”

On receiving this letter, Gabrielle wrote back once (after talking it over with her father) that she would be with Ingram in a few days. It was a small thing for Gabrielle to make up her mind to leave her father, but in this case she did not need much urging. " 'That we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God,' " she murmurs to herself as she answers Ingram's letter. "Oh, that I may be permitted to give him some of this comfort."

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CHAPTER XXIV.

SIX weeks after Valarie's death, and three days after Gabrielle has been at the Imperial Hotel, Ingram brings Gabrielle a musical magazine in which there is a complimentary criticism on another of Valarie's "characteristic tone studies." It is spoken of as being full of strange, delicate pathos, like the dying wail of a little child as for the last time it feels its mother's arms round it. The unfathomable sadness, the evident incompleteness of this life, strike Gabrielle as she reads this criticism. As Ingram finishes reading, he murmurs something about a derisive fate. Gabrielle is silent for some time after reading this criticism. She knows it has opened Ingram's wound afresh. The first shock, which stunned him, has passed away, but now the cold realization of all his loss is clutching at his heart-strings with bitter force.

Gabrielle's silence soothes him, for it is never from inattention, but from deepest sympathy, and she always makes that sympathy felt.

"Her life seems to me now a glorious fragment broken off only too soon by a cruel fate," says Ingram, gloomily. "What might she not have become? Although I most of all lamented it, still I could not but admire that undeviating will of hers, which nothing could move. Her heart was true, although it was part of her creed to stifle every tender feeling

so as to give free and uninterrupted play to the power of mind and imagination."

"Yes, dear, that is true; her heart was tender and always prompted her to do the kind act, although, you say, she was always afraid of impeding the mind's progress."

"Ah, you did understand and love her. This love of yours for her always touches me as nothing else the world ever can. Gabrielle, your love for me never moved me in any way, although I know you have given me a very deep, forbearing love, such as sisters seldom give their brothers. Still this love for me as great as it is and good as it is, never struck me as supernatural, like your love for Valarie. Yes," after a pause, "your love for Valarie was strange."

"Not was, for it is still the same, dear—nothing can alter it."

Not a muscle moves in Ingram's face, but he rises hastily and begins to walk up and down the room. "Ah, that is where I cannot follow you, Gabrielle. Now you seem to have entered a realm of mysticism. I cannot follow you there, although in my present state of mental suffering it seems to me very beautiful." His voice grows low and tremulous as he speaks. "A love that cannot cease with death, but still lives and loves on—no wonder that long ago I thought it unnatural. Now it has grown more supernatural and more beautiful than ever to me!" He pauses, then says, "Gabrielle, I don't know how to express it. I scarcely understand it myself, but it is as if that love of yours for her had given birth to something within me quite

apart from this life. If I am indefinite, it is because that feeling is indefinite. I cannot define it! It is just some indescribable longing which your love for her has awakened in me. It is not my love for her. I can see nothing unnatural in *my* love. But you say you still love her. I cannot say that. There seems nothing now on which to lavish my love. She has become to me as nothing. That was what was so terrible to me at first, that emptiness which swept through me when I felt all hope in life torn from me. I marvel now even at my being able to talk about it. But your saying you still love her has touched something, I don't know what—and in talking to you it is as if that heart emptiness is becoming filled—not with new feeling, but with those old feelings purified, though still aching with my loss. As I talk to you, as I think of your love, that hungry yearning which has sprung up within me will not be stifled. It is something inseparable from my grief, yet something that lives apart from this life, it seems."

There is a long silence in the room after these words of Ingram's. Gabrielle knows what it has cost him to say this, and she makes no comment whatever on all he has said, either with regard to her love for Valarie or his feelings.

A feeling akin to joy steals into her heart, though, that her love for her friend should so appeal to him and awaken in him any feeling apart from this life. Is not his soul, she asks herself, being quickened and born again through the death of that one dearest to him on earth? This last seems to her strangest of all.

God's ways of working are wonderful, and certainly not our way, she thinks to herself, and perhaps she is being permitted to see some of God's workings on the human soul. How she has prayed and agonized on behalf of this brother! And now is God giving her an answer to these prayers? She marvels at the joy that seems to be flooding her heart. But she says nothing, and only rises presently and, slipping her hand through Ingram's arm, joins him in his monotonous pacing up and down.

"I am afraid I am very selfish about you," he says after some time, "to bring you here, away from your father, whom you cannot bear to leave for a day even. But I cannot tell you how much good you have done to me already. Your presence has helped me to look beyond my pain in the face. I could not do this before. So I might well say, 'Your presence brings peace.' It has already brought it to me."

Gabrielle's eyes fill with tears that slowly roll down her cheeks. Ingram stoops and kisses her, with quite a new-born tenderness in his manner.

"Papa wanted me to come to you, dear. He has been very anxious about you."

"Gabrielle, I think I can now understand our father as I have never before understood him. I can even understand now his utter unpunctuality. I feel that the things which used to annoy me before are now powerless to move me in any way. This life to our father is but as something given to raise him up to the true life. Is it not so, dear? Like your love for him which lives on into that other life, so his life is a

much lived now in that other life as here on earth. What, then, is punctuality to a soul that has already entered in spirit the unseen realms of eternity? Gabrielle, what is it?"

But Gabrielle gives him no answer. Those words of his have moved her so strongly that from sheer excess of feeling, from a mighty rush of joy and wonderment through heart and soul, she has fainted. Ingram has never seen anyone faint in his life before, and he is in great trouble; but he has hardly laid her down on the sofa before she opens her eyes and smiles at him. "It is nothing," she says, faintly, trying to rise, "don't be distressed, dear."

"But I am distressed. What could have made you faint? Have you ever fainted before?"

"Once, I think; but it is nothing."

"But it must be something, Gabrielle. Perhaps you are unhappy at being here away from our father."

"Oh, no! No, indeed, see how slight it is. I am all right."

Gabrielle wonders if she should tell him the simple truth, that it was just an excess of deep joy at finding him so near the truth that has moved her so strangely, and that after all she has gone through with Valarie she is still worn out and very easily upset. But she knows he cannot yet understand her, so she is silent, only waiting for the time when he will understand her fully.

"You must not get up, you must just rest here quietly, and go to bed early. I forgot to tell you I met Harold Argent to-day. He said something about coming to see you to-morrow."

"I shall be very glad to see him," Gabrielle answered gently, with that far-away look creeping into her eyes.

Ingram does not allow her to talk much after this, but he does his best to cheer her, as he thinks. He blames himself for having been selfish about her, and makes up his mind as he leaves her that night that he must send her back to her father soon. She will not acknowledge it, but he is sure she is pining for her father, and is altogether lonely here, although he has given himself to her entirely every day since she has been in Paris. He feels nearer to this sister to-night than he has ever felt before in his life.

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CHAPTER XXV.

GABRIELLE moves uneasily in her sleep. Then she wakes up at last with a horrible feeling of suffocation. She springs from her bed suddenly and stands for a moment in the middle of the room in a dazed state. Now she is wide awake, and she takes in the whole situation with a dull horror. The room is full of smoke. She is drawing in long breaths of smoke. The awful truth bursts upon her—the hotel is on fire, and she has been sleeping quietly through all this danger that surrounds her! She hastily throws on some clothes, and then, springing to the door, unlocks it. But such a whirlwind of smoke and flame bursts upon her that she dashes the door back and staggers to the window. She tries to throw it up, but she cannot move the large sash. A strange sight meets her dazed vision as she looks through that window. A sea of faces below meets her eyes. A surge of voices rises to her ears. All seems confusion! A chaos she looks down upon, of human beings, fire engines, ladders—men calling, yelling, rushing about in mad despair, women wringing their hands, with faces uplifted on which nothing is written but distorted horror.

For a moment Gabrielle tries to look down calmly, and succeeds. For a few seconds she gazes down quietly on that wild scene below her, then the room seems suddenly to fill with smoke, and she sees flames are creeping through the door. The heat

now is almost unendurable. Hardly knowing what she does, she dashes her hands against the window pane and breaks out the large glass with a crash. Both her hands are cut and bleeding, but she is scarcely conscious of the fact. She leans far out of the window and gazes down on that human world below. There is a shout! She has been seen. She knows that hundreds of eyes are gazing up at her now. The scorching heat is growing more intense. The roar of the flames is deafening. Gabrielle begins to feel that in a few moments she must be buried beneath a burning mass of ruins. The thought comes to her like a flash of lightning, "Throw yourself down and all will instantly be over." She hesitates. Should she throw herself down? It would be instant, violent death, surely less horrible than being burnt alive in this burning room. "My God! My God!" she murmurs, "now give me strength to meet bravely, calmly whatever is Thy will." And she feels that she dares not throw herself down, it would be like taking her own life in her hands. "And is this to be my end?" is the thought that rushes through her mind rapidly as she stands there—"is this the end that I have lived for? Has this test of my faith been necessary? O Father!" And with that cry on her lips comes the thought of her earthly father. As this thought flashes over her heart and brain a wave of infinite weakness sweeps over her. Standing there lighted up by that cruel, hungry fire, before those hundreds of eyes gazing at her, she covers her face with her hands. The thought of her father has almost made her sink down.

in despair. She could have borne all, but that thought has for the moment quite unnerved her. Her own suffering and fiery death was terrible, but it did not daunt her; but now, now she only stands there filled with this thought, When he knows all, all, what will that poor, dependent father do without her? And she stifles a moan that breaks from her dry, parched lips. . . .

Presently a helmeted fireman with a long ladder is seen making his way to the front of the building. He seems to have emerged from the left wing, and Gabrielle cannot see him from where she stands. The crowd gives a roar of wild applause as the fireman raises the ladder, and then, after adjusting it, begins to ascend.

Harold, for it was he, knows before he begins his fiery ascent that the ladder is too short, but he trusts to his exceeding length of limb and his athletic power to stand him in good stead now. The ladder only reaches the window below that at which Gabrielle is standing. Promptly, but with perfect precision, Harold balances himself on the second rung of the ladder, then twists one leg half round the side, and, leaning against the building, stretches his two arms upwards and outwards, under the window at which Gabrielle is standing, but she has not seen him.

"Gabrielle!" and his very voice is reaching up after her.

Gabrielle, leaning out, gazes down into the upturned face below her.

"Quick, Gabrielle! Get out on the window ledge,

and then drop down into my arms. Don't be afraid. And now there is firm command in every tone of Harold's voice.

And Gabrielle knows and realizes all. Swiftly without pausing, never doubting, she places herself on the window ledge as directed, and then slips herself down, half sliding against the building—down, down, and then those great, waiting arms close round her. As Harold clasps her he reels for a second and the ladder quivers under the shock and double weight, but with wonderful calmness he balances himself and begins his dangerous descent amid the roar, not only of flames, but of voices that rise from the multitude below.

Harold is now realizing what a glorious strength God has endued him with. God has just given him what he has felt could never be his—just a way, a means of proving to the woman he loved what his love would do for her, how he would gladly brave anything for her dear sake. He at this moment feels his heart soften within him and grow nearer to God. He feels now he can die content. His life has not been given to him for nought. He has not lived in vain. God has now blessed him with a great, supreme blessing. With Gabrielle near to him, with one strong arm holding her and clasping her to him—now with this joy at his heart, that to him has been given the power to save her—he envies no man.

"Hold on to me tightly," Harold breathes rather than speaks. "My darling, trust me, you shall not fall! You are safe!" And though encompassed with

danger, and with death staring them in the face, still so mysterious is that power of love that Gabrielle feels her whole being vibrate with an unknown force, as Harold's tones of strong love, rather than the mere words themselves, reveal all his feelings. No need for words between them now; something, that indefinite veil that at times conceals love, has been rent away from between them forever. Soul knows soul. Heart sees heart. Love, subtle, mighty, but absolute, has claimed and bound them with his indissoluble bands. No power now on earth or in heaven can rend that tie that has just been forged, and each is as clearly conscious of it as if all had been uttered again and again.

"Gabrielle, put your arms round my neck. Hold on to me tightly—quick, my darling! For God's sake don't let go, for if anything should happen to you now I could not help throwing myself down after you. Don't be afraid, darling. Only trust me. You are safe with me. It is not the first time I have done a thing like this. I know what I am doing."

Not a word escapes Gabrielle, but, never hesitating, nothing doubting, she puts her arms round his neck and clings to him with all the strength of life, with all the strength of love. And with that precious burden clinging to him Harold descends. If the ladder should give way, or if he should take one false step! But he has done it too often now to hesitate. He only has one fear, lest his strong love should make him less strong than usual, or make him falter in any way. "Hold on tighter! Hold on tighter!" he keeps

entreating. "Tell me if you are faint, if you can hold on, and I can put both arms round you. Thank God that to me the privilege of saving you has been given. Gabrielle, I could die for you now."

Gabrielle trembles, not so much from fear as from a strong, new emotion that is flashed through her being as she feels herself strained to her present position while slowly but steadily they descend. "I am quite safe," she whispers back, almost in his ear, for his face is near to his cheek. "I will not let you go—do not be afraid. I feel quite safe with you. Oh, Harold, I have been so unhappy about you. I have wanted to hear about you so often."

Harold's breath comes and goes faster, but he does not answer these words. He scarcely dares to let himself feel all the meaning of them at this moment. Her life is in his hands. Has she not just said she felt quite safe with him? These words are thrillingly sweet to him. The woman that for years he has held in his thoughts with a worshipful reverence has just told him, in the midst of awful danger, that she has been unhappy about him and has often wanted to hear about him. Her feeling safe with him, though it is what is sweetest to him, is what has made all his great, hopeless love for her awaken within him and cry aloud.

And the thought comes to Gabrielle at the same time, that she once promised to do anything in her power for this friend—to be always his friend—and now it all seems to her such a strange reversal of things, of all that *she* meant to do for him.

Slowly, step by step, Gabrielle feels she is leaving death behind and going back to life. As they step into life again, with that last step to earth, there is a loud shout of triumph, which ends suddenly in a cry of terror. Gabrielle only reaches life again to look up at that huge burning building and see standing at one of the windows another human creature—leaning out just as she has leant out—standing there and living in anticipation of a terrible death. Presently, as the cry dies away and the crowd stands gazing up in almost breathless suspense, a burst of flame through an adjoining window lights up with a vivid glow that figure leaning out of the window. The words break from Gabrielle: "Lord Lithmore! Oh, God, can nothing save him! Harold! Harold!" she cries, "your brother! Save him, oh, save him!"

Harold stands there like some young giant towering motionless above her. He scarcely seems to hear her, his eyes are fixed, too, upon that figure at the window. A stern expression is on that white face which looks out from the fireman's helmet. Suddenly he turns and looks down on Gabrielle. There is now an expression almost of pleading in his eyes as they meet hers. "You send me," he says slowly; "at your bidding I give my life for him."

"No, no! not your life, Harold! Harold! My God, oh, save him! Don't go, then—not your life, Harold!" She is trying to hold him back now, but Harold gently puts her on one side and then committing her to the care of a fireman standing near by, without another word, with that set, hard look on his

face, he begins to work his way through the crowd. All make way for him instantly, for they know or guess too well what this young Hercules is about to do. And again he begins his fiery ascent, which is now a thousand-fold more dangerous than before, for the fire has been making terrible headway in spite of all the engines at work.

"Oh, Christ," Gabrielle murmurs, "shield him, spare him! Oh, what have I done!" And then his words come rushing back to her, "At your bidding I give my life for him." She knows as no one else knows the depth of meaning in those words. She knows that he looks on this brother as having taken from him his birthright, as having taken everything in this life from him. And now at her bidding, as he says, he is going to give his life in the vain attempt to save this brother. Her eyes are fixed on the great, massive form now slowly scaling this building of flame, as it seems, when there is a crash, and there rises to heaven what to all appearance is a mammoth display of fireworks. All is obscure to Gabrielle. There is a murmur all round—

"It has fallen! It has fallen!"

Then there is a sound as of rushing waters in Gabrielle's ears. The blackness of the blackest night closes round her. She falls to the ground in a swoon. A great burly fireman lifts her up like a little child and bears her away from the crowd.

CHAPTER XXVI.

WHEN Gabrielle opens her eyes Ingram is beside her. He bends over the bed and takes her hand. There is a look of great weariness in his face quite foreign to him. "What is it, darling?" he asks, reading some question in her eyes.

"Harold?" is all she can murmur.

"He was saved," Ingram answers, with something of evasion in his tone. He is not in the least aware of his sister's feeling for Harold. He is thinking of all she has gone through, and that nothing distressing should be mentioned to her for some time, for he knows how sensitive she is.

"And Lord Lithmore?"

"Oh, he has escaped serious injury."

"Then Harold did not escape unhurt?" Gabriel says, with all the quick intuition of apprehensive love.

"No, not entirely. The ladder gave way—burnt away, it is supposed—before he reached the last steps, and they both fell some feet to the ground. Lord Lithmore escaped with a few bruises, but Harold hurt his back in some way, so that he has not been able to move since. I hope he will soon be all right," Ingram adds, trying to speak cheerfully. "The doctor says his enormous weight was against him; if he had been a small man he probably would not have been hurt. You know Harold Argent really is quite a young giant."

As she remains there silent and pondering she lives over again the noble way in which he brought her back from death—from an awful death. She always knew he was a very dear friend, but now she knows he is dearer than any mere friend could ever be. In those moments of terrible danger, when he held her and with all his wonderful strength brought her back from death to life, she learned his very heart. "He saved me!" There is a sweet joy in the very thought. It was a fearful experience to live through, but even in that experience came this strange sweetness, this joy that can never be taken from her. She would not have had it otherwise, now that she knows all, and she tells herself that God has been very good to her. "Where is Harold?" she asks presently, opening her eyes and fixing them earnestly on Ingram.

"He was taken to the hospital with others that were hurt in the fire. Lord Lithmore is looking after him, and I have been to see him as often as I could leave you. I hope he is all right." But the hope expressed in that tone was almost *too hopeful* to be quite reassuring to Gabrielle. "He is a noble fellow," she says to Gabrielle. "I always knew it, but I never imagined to that extent of his nobility. I learned much of it from the fireman who brought you here that night. Argenta's last thought before going for Lord Lithmore was to put you in the care of that fireman. God knows we have much to thank him for," and Ingram raises his sister's hand to his lips with great tenderness.

"Have I been ill long, Ingram?"

"No, dear, only a few days. It has all been

awful shock to you, but you are all right now, and Dr. Lorm assures me you will soon be up and about."

"Does my father know all?"

Here Lady Courtney interferes.

"Gabrielle really must not talk any more, Ingram," she says, with a degree of firmness not to be questioned. "My dear child," she continues, "it was better for your father not to know anything till you were better. To-morrow I shall write and tell him everything. Now I am going to send Ingram away, because I know that so long as he is beside you I shall never keep you from asking questions. Say 'good night,' Ingram, and go; I mean what I say. Gabrielle must have rest and sleep now."

Ingram reluctantly takes his departure. As he kisses Gabrielle she whispers: "Go and see Harold, and tell him from me I am all right." Love tells her that he would rather hear this than anything else. And then she closes her eyes and lies there thinking of what Ingram has just told her, that Lord Lithmore is looking after Harold, and she wonders if he knows all. Then she falls asleep thinking God's ways are indeed mysterious and past finding out, that this life has to be lived out just a simple life of trust.

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CHAPTER XXVII.

It is two days after the fire, and Lord Lithmore, entering the hospital to which Harold Argent has been taken, is requested by an attendant to see one of the doctors before seeing the patient in No. . . . This is the small room in which Harold has been placed through Lord Lithmore's influence, instead of in the large ward with some twelve or fourteen other patients. Lord Lithmore was much bruised and is still suffering from all he has recently gone through, but nothing could have kept him from coming to see after this daring young fellow to whom he owes his life. He knows that Harold Argent has been badly hurt, while he has escaped in a marvellous way. There is more than mere gratitude in Lord Lithmore's heart for his preserver. His feeling of unbounded admiration for this dauntless fireman who has risked his life, first for the woman most precious to him on earth, and then for himself, is akin to reverence. He does not know that it was Gabrielle who pleaded for him. He never knows that. . . .

"I am sorry to have to tell you, my lord, that after a consultation this morning on the case of that young fireman who saved you, we are of opinion that he never can recover from the blow to the spine received in the fall." Dr. Davis speaks quickly, and with a shadow of doubt in his tone.

"But I thought at first you hoped."

"My lord, we did hope at first for the best; but after this morning's examination I fear the worst must be expected."

"And what is that worst, exactly?" there is a look of keenest anxiety on Lord Lithmore's handsome face.

"Either that the blow to the spine will kill him, or that he will linger out his life in this state of utter helplessness."

"This is dreadful," says Lord Lithmore. "Is there really no hope?" there is the persuasive tone of a pleading child in his voice as he puts the question.

"I fear not. I should only be deceiving you if I held out any hope."

"All his life to be helpless after having nobly saved two lives," murmurs Lord Lithmore. "What is my gratitude to him for such a sacrifice? It all seems too terrible! Have you said anything to him about it yet?"

"No, my lord; there is time enough to tell a man that he must be helpless for the rest of his life. I should advise that he be not told for some time. He passed a very bad night last night."

"So young, poor fellow! Why, he must be about my age, I should think."

"Do you know whether he has any relations?"

"I don't know, but I can easily find out about him from Miss Amethyst's brother, Mr. Tremoine. They know all about him. His appearing as a fireman that night seems to have been a whim of his. He has been given to all sorts of daring exploits ever since he was a boy. Miss Amethyst and I are not the only indi-

viduals who owe their lives to him. But it seems to be so dreadful that such noble, gallant conduct should end in this way." The mystery of life is being slowly opened up to this young lord. . . .

Harold is lying very still, with his eyes closed, when Lord Lithmore enters. His right hand lies on Harold's chest as if clasping something. After Lord Lithmore has stood there some seconds looking down on him, Harold opens his eyes and looks straight at him. Perhaps these moments are moments of the keenest humiliation that Harold has ever known in his life. He longs to rise and get away. But there he has to lie, chained to that bed by a great incomprehensible helplessness. All the great strength in which he has so often gloried has gone, and there is nothing but a desperate weakness all through him. The old feeling of conscious power is still strong upon him, and yet this most awful helplessness ties him down to that bed like the most helpless of infants.

"I hope you have had a little rest and that I have not disturbed you?" There is such winning sweetness in the way these words are said that Harold finds it hard to resist them.

"Yes," he answers, rather shortly, "I have rested as much as I suppose it is possible to rest under these circumstances."

"Is there nothing that you would like? Nothing that I can have done for you?"

"Nothing."

"I wish you would let me do something for you. I would have had you moved to my place in town if the doctors would have consented to let you move."

"I would not have consented, though," again Harold answers, with something of savageness in his tone.

"Why?" And now there is very natural surprise in Lord Lithmore's tone.

"Simply because I would not have it so. Some things are impossible. That is one."

"But I think I could have made it more comfortable for you there, if the move had been possible."

"I should not have cared for that. I am quite comfortable here."

"But I care for you to be as comfortable as possible," says Lord Lithmore, in his manly generosity. Then, very gravely, thinking of what he has just heard about Harold, "I consider now you belong to me."

Harold winces.

"Because I saved your life?"

"Certainly."

"Well, know then—I could not belong to you in any smallest degree. I don't want your gratitude. I don't want it, and I won't have it. What I did for you I would have done for a dog."

This is not quite true, but Lord Lithmore only answers gently: "Well, I from the dog's point of view cannot but be grateful. I must be grateful to you all my life. You bravely risked your life for me. You have given me perhaps more than life."

"My God," Harold mutters, utterly mistaking his meaning and thinking that he is alluding to his having saved Gabrielle Amethyst. "I have given you, or you have taken from me, what was dearest of all to me."

"I know," Lord Lithmore goes on, scarcely heeding these words, and certainly not understanding them. "I know no man likes to be indebted to another for anything. I know it will be painful for you to accept anything from me, even my gratitude; but in your case—"

"In my case it will be simply impossible," but from Harold at last. It is almost too much for him. He is suffering tortures at this moment, which his helplessness increases immensely.

"That is absurd! It can't be impossible—you must let me help you now and so long as you are unable to move. And God alone knows how long that may be. You must now just look upon me in the light of a brother."

This is too much for Harold. He throws his clenched hand from him, with a sharp contraction of pain in every line of his face. As he throws his hand out something falls from it to the ground. Lord Lithmore stoops and picks it up. It has opened in half, and there within the little golden locket are two faces looking at him. Both are quite familiar to him. One is the miniature of a small, pale face, with large eyes, full of sad feeling.

"Gabrielle Amethyst," comes slowly and with surprise from Lord Lithmore. He looks at Harold.

"Give it to me," says Harold, putting out his hand and eagerly trying to regain his lost treasure. "Give it to me, I say! What is she to you?"

"What is she to me?" Lord Lithmore answers almost like one in a dream. "Only the most perfect

woman on earth, the truest, noblest woman I have ever known."

Harold looks at him keenly. But those calm words of his, spoken so frankly, deceive him.

"Is that all? Well, to me she has been the truest friend I ever had. Perhaps if it had not been for her I should have cut my throat long ago. She is my friend, that is all."

Then Lord Lithmore's eye is turned to the other face, and still he holds that locket with eyes riveted on it. For some time he gazes in silence, then he looks at Harold. As their eyes meet he reads in Harold's face nothing but defiance.

"Who is it?" he asks slowly. But Harold turns away his face, on which there is only dogged determination written.

"How did you ever get this miniature?" Lord Lithmore says gently. Still Harold is silent. And still Lord Lithmore continues to gaze with a puzzled expression at that miniature of Mrs. Argent, taken years ago, when she was quite a girl. But Harold does not know that it is taken from an old oil painting which hangs in the dining-room at "Cumbermere Park," Lord Lithmore's place; a picture that has smiled upon him ever since he was a little boy and which is as familiar to him as his own mother's face.

"There is some mystery about it all that I cannot understand. But I don't wish to be rude. As you will not answer me, I suppose you have some reason for your determined silence. I will not press the matter. But it is all very strange to me; I cannot understand

how you happen to be wearing a likeness of my grandmother, Lady Lithmore." Lord Lithmore speaks with extreme gentleness. "Why," he says suddenly, "my grandmother's maiden name was Argent. You must be some relation of mine," and then it strikes him that Harold's manner is altogether strange and unnatural, and that there is something which he does not understand about Harold Argent.

"I am no relation of yours," mutters Harold, and most savagely now, "and could never be." After that there is silence between them for some few minutes.

"Would you mind answering me this one question?" And there is such earnest entreaty in Lord Lithmore's voice that Harold relents enough to reply "It depends on what the question is."

"Does Miss Amethyst care for you?"

"No!" almost thunders Harold; then in his direct way, "She does care for me in a way. She prays for me every day of her life, and no one can take that from me. She promised me that long ago, and Gabrielle Amethyst could never break a promise. Yes, she prays for me every day of her life. And God knows that is all I want from her—her prayers. I want nothing more from her. If I could I would not have it so. I tell you the thought of her is the only good, pure thought I can know." And Harold draws a deep breath and turns his face to the wall. He knows at that moment a great weariness such as he has never known in his life. Heart, soul and body all seem weary alike. He tells Lord Lithmore much more in these words than he intended to tell.

Lord Lithmore knows—feels, rather—that there must be some reason for his saying that he would not have more from her than her prayers if he could. For he reads in Harold's manner, as one man can read another, that this now helpless young giant absolutely worships the very thought of Gabrielle Amethyst. And Lord Lithmore wonders if it might be possible that Gabrielle cares for this young hero, and if this is the reason it was impossible for her to give him what he had pleaded for earnestly some time ago. Then the thought comes to him that he must see Miss Amethyst and tell her the doctor's verdict about Harold. Is she not the person to break the terrible news of lifelong helplessness to Harold? Will she not be able to break it to him more gently than anyone else? And from the bottom of his heart, as he thinks of Harold's state, he gives him deepest pity, and would do anything in his power to alleviate his hopeless condition.

"You have known Miss Amethyst for years?" Lord Lithmore says presently.

"Yes, I have known her from a child. She cares and thinks of but one thing, after her father, and that is to give her life—to yield it up, as much as it is in her power—to those who are in pain and grief, or struggling in the throes of sin. To save some drops of grief, to soothe some throbs of pain, is all she lives for. She never thinks of herself. Thank God, it was my hand that saved her!"

It is an intense relief to Harold to say this much. He is not one of your self-contained individuals, like

Ingram, and his pent-up feelings have been a so weight to him lying there. "I wonder how much longer I shall have to be here!" he says suddenly. "One day in this helpless state is as a thousand years to me," and he moves his head backwards and forwards in a restless way. "The doctor did not tell you when I could move and get away from this?"

"No," is the very grave answer, "he did not tell me when you would be able to move. But I fear it will be some time yet. You must try and not be too anxious to get up. I know it must seem terribly hard to you."

"Oh, well," says Harold, with a flash of his old-time good-nature, "I don't want you to put it in that way. I would do it all over if the chance was placed before me again; that is just the truth."

"What! Even if you knew you would have to lie here in this helpless state?"

"Yes, even if I knew that, and the chance of saving my life was put before me, I could not hesitate."

"But if you knew that all your life you would have to lie helpless, then, then—" Lord Lithmore pauses. Something has impelled him to put that question before thinking of how it might be taken.

Harold has risen in bed, as much as he is able to rise. His face has grown drawn and white with the very fear of this—to him—ghastly supposition. "Is this true?" he says hoarsely, "is there any such fear entertained by the doctors, that I may never rise from this bed? Don't trifle with me. As before God, answer me! Am I to be doomed to lie like this all my

life?" He has grasped Lord Lithmore's hand in his dire extremity. Great drops of perspiration are on his forehead.

Lord Lithmore has never before looked on such human anguish in his life. He answers slowly, hesitatingly, "I should not have asked that question. The doctors do fear that it may be so, but doctors are not always right. They are not infallible. They only think it may be so, they cannot be sure."

Harold makes no answer, he only drops that hand which he had clutched and held with strength which surprised Lord Lithmore, and now sinks back on the bed without a word. Then he turns his face to the wall and remains motionless.

Lord Lithmore knows he is suffering in spirit; and he knows he is powerless to help him. To attempt to offer him comfort at this moment would be worse than absurd, so he remains there silent, blaming himself for having put a question that made Harold guess at the truth.

The doctor enters presently, and then Lord Lithmore leaves, with his feelings and thoughts in a state of strange confusion. There is a mystery about Harold that he cannot fathom. Why should his tone to him always be one of such great bitterness? And then that miniature of his grandmother in Harold's locket comes back to him and puzzles him disagreeably. Suddenly as he walks along he makes up his mind as to the course to pursue in order to solve this mystery of the picture. And he makes up his mind on another point, that he must see Gabrielle Amethyst and tell her at once about Harold.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE next day, when Harold awakes after an uneasy sleep—he has had no true, sound sleep since that fear of life-long helplessness has come to him—his eyes open upon Lord Lithmore sitting beside him. The latter rises slowly, and putting his hand upon Harold's, lying on the coverlet, he says calmly, but with deep meaning ringing in his voice, "Harold, my brother."

Harold snatches away his hand from that touch as if it had burned him. There is a long pause. Then Lord Lithmore speaks: "You must hear me. I know all. I know how you feel. I know all your wrongs. I can imagine your bitterness against me. But do not be unjust. Do not blame me. I know I seem to have taken all rights away from you. But I can only solemnly assure you that I was utterly ignorant of the true relationship between us—brotherhood."

"No!" thunders Harold, now rising in bed as far as he is able, "never that! You cannot deceive me. It can never be that. Even if you would have it so, I would not and never will."

"You must not move like that," says Lord Lithmore, "or I must go away."

Harold sinks back and remains silent.

"And even if you do not wish it, how can you undo that knot of brotherhood which God has tied between us? Let man do his best to deny it and undo it, I

tell you he cannot. What God has done no man can undo."

"In the eyes of the world, you know—" begins Harold.

"I know how the eyes of the world look upon it. But I have nothing to do with that. I will have nothing to do with the way the world would look at it. A sin has been committed. God knows I had nothing to do with that sin. It is a thing of the past, as much as a sin *can* be a thing of the past, but the result is here before me in the shape of my own brother—my own father's son. That father has long ago had to answer for the evil committed. Now it rests somewhat in my power to repair that great wrong done—the cruellest wrong that can be wrought."

"Yes," repeats Harold, "the cruellest wrong that can be done. Shall I tell you what it is like? It is like socially branding a human creature and then sending him forth to meet the scorn of his fellow-creatures. I have never felt clean since I knew it all, and I shall never feel clean again for the rest of my life," a low groan breaks from him.

"Oh, my Brother! my brother! do not withdraw from me the hand of a brother. Do you deny, in your pride, the relationship which is God-given? Let them say what they please."

"And would you acknowledge that relationship before all the world?" asks Harold, fixing his eyes with a puzzled look on Lord Lithmore's face.

"Before all the world," he answers decidedly, without a moment's hesitation in his voice.

Harold passes his hand over his eyes. This is something he was not prepared for. He was prepared for scorn, even for contumely, but he was not prepared for this brotherly love. He cannot understand it. He is still a little suspicious of it.

"Harold, my brother," says Lord Lithmore gently, "can you not believe that I am proud to call you brother? Do I not owe my life to you?"

"But if you did not owe your life to me?"

"Could I be otherwise than proud to own as a brother a man who has earned four or five medals already for bravery and daring? Harold, what can I say to make you feel sure of my brotherly feeling for you?"

"How did you find it all out?" asks Harold, still with some doubt in his voice.

"I found out by showing a photograph of my grandmother to Ingram Tremoine, and asking him who it was. He instantly answered that it was a photograph of Mrs. Argent—Harold Argent's mother. The very natural expression escaped me that you must be some relation. And then I got at all the truth at last. I went last night to our family solicitor and learned the whole story, how my grandmother had quarrelled with my father about you, and had then gone off, after your mother's death, and devoted herself to you for the rest of her life."

"Yes," says Harold softly, "she did devote herself to me. She gave her life for me. No mother ever gave more devotion to her own child than did my grandmother, for not even her—"

"Hers must have been a rarely beautiful and noble character. I thank God that she did what she has done; for if she had not taken you, I should probably never have known you, Harold."

There is something so genuine in these words that Harold's heart is touched at last. He puts out his hand, which Lord Lithmore grasps warmly. "For her sake I take your hand. She would have wished it so."

"She only quarrelled with her son, our father, because he refused to do what he could to right a wrong, and she was right," Lord Lithmore answers; "and she would have me," he continues, "not only acknowledge you as my own brother, but treat you in every way as one."

"That is not possible," Harold says slowly. "That could not—that cannot be. I thank you for having said that you look upon me as your brother, but there it must stop. It can go no further than that."

"Why?"

"Because I do not wish our relationship openly acknowledged. It can do you no good; on the contrary, in the world's opinion, it is a blot upon you."

"No, no, not that. But even if it be that, I do not care for the world's opinion; it is a matter of total indifference to me what the world says."

"But I do care," says Harold, "I am that thing of shame."

"Never say that again," breaks from Lord Lithmore, in a tone of concentrated passion. "I will not hear it even from you. Never make any allusion of that sort before me. I will not have it," and rising

he paces the small room with quick, impatient strides. "Well," he says, stopping suddenly in his walk, "if you will have it so, it must be so; but you must let me now be to you a brother, not only in name, but a true brother in other senses of the word. You must receive from me now what should have been your rightful portion as my brother long ago."

"I tell you it can never be. Nothing that you can ever say can alter my determination on that point," and there is a calm resolve in Harold's voice not to be mistaken. "I have held your hand. I have said, for her sake, all bitterness shall be fought against in my heart. But more than that can never be. It is impossible."

Lord Lithmore is silent. He has tried nobly to repair this wrong, but he feels he has utterly failed. He is very generous and warm-hearted, is this young nobleman, and he feels utterly dissatisfied with himself as he sits there. He does not know how much he has gained when Harold takes his hand in token of forgiveness, a sign that bitterness towards him shall no longer dwell in his heart. He cannot know how Harold has suffered, how much he still has to suffer. He cannot put himself in Harold's place, so he is a little unjust in thinking that Harold is still bearing in his heart anger and hatred by refusing to accede to what he has proposed. Harold will accept nothing from him, he thinks, because still in his heart of hearts he is bitter against him.

"You have refused everything," Lord Lithmore says now, with not a little bitterness in his tone.

"No, not everything. I have only refused what it is impossible to accept. But I have not refused your brotherly kindness. I have not refused the brother's affection you have so generously offered. But more than that I can never accept. If you had ever felt as I have felt, then you would know it must be so."

Lord Lithmore makes no answer to this, but he tells himself that it is not because he has failed once about what he wanted more than anything on earth, that he is to fail always. He feels he can never rest till he has made some sort of reparation to this brother for the selfish, cruel wrong done to him. He leaves Harold soon after.

A look of weary hopelessness creeps into Harold's face after his brother has left him. "My God! my God! Why hast thou forsaken me?" he murmurs despairingly.

CHAPTER XXIX.

PARIS, city of fêtes and pleasure, fashion and luxury—its broad, bright streets thronged with well dressed passers outside. But Harold lies in that small, dismal room all alone. It is not long since Lord Lithmore left him, but he has lived through a world of suffering in that time. He feels, as he lies there in his great helplessness, that God has taken everything from him. He feels that he has been stripped of all that was dearest to him. "First my name," he murmurs, in the agony of forsaken misery; "then my mother—true! more tender than any mother. And now my strength. O God—if there be a God—help me to say, 'Thy will be done.' I cannot say it now." All around is gloom and blackness, and he covers his face with his hand.

The door opens. There is a little noise in the room. Someone touches him softly, bends over him and takes his hand, and with that touch "the sixth sweet sense of love" asserts its power to overcome doubt and fear.

"Do you know me?" a voice whispers, with tender sweetness that in a moment seems to envelop him in a garment of peace. No word of love has passed between them, and yet, kneeling there by his side, Gabrielle—for it is she—says tremulously: "O my love!"

Harold turns to her. He gets as near to her as his great helplessness will permit him. He puts his hand on the bowed head beside him, and with that touch

the words spring forth: "O my God! Thou hast not forsaken me." A long silence follows these words. He lifts her hand and presses it to his lips. Slowly he is drinking in that thought—she has come to him in his great need—she has not left him alone. She is beside him now, and he knows she will never leave him. He wonders now that he has not expected her all the time. Oh, the joy of feeling her near to him, of feeling the warm touch of her hand. But how can he ever part from her? No one can ever know how much he has suffered in these few days. Now all that suffering is almost forgotten with her beside him. There is a long silence in that small room in the hospital. A holy calm seems to have stolen over him with her presence. He wants nothing more, he tells himself. She has come to him; he knows now she loves, really loves him, with a love he cares more for than for aught else in the world. That Gabrielle Amethyst can love him is to him wholly incomprehensible. What has he done that she should care for him thus? His heart rises in thankfulness to the God of all good, the God of all love. He feels God at this moment as he has never felt Him in his life before, and he draws nearer to the bosom of his Heavenly Father than he has ever before done. His heart is full of thankfulness: he can only drink in his great joy and be silent. His heart has been starving for so long that now this feast of love is intoxicating to him. As the first rush of joy passes the thought of all his life-long helplessness comes to him with a new sting of despair—the words come with a groan: "Oh, my darling! my

darling! do you know that I shall always be the same—always helpless like this? They say I can never be any better," and he sobs like a child.

Gabrielle has often comforted him when they were children together, and now it is as if she goes back in time to their childhood spent together. She rises and bends over him, and, with intensified tenderness, she puts her lips to his lips and kisses him softly.

"Oh, God," he says hoarsely, "I feel that kiss has washed me clean—clean from that blot which has been upon me ever since I first knew that—" Again she puts her lips to his, this time with a lingering passionate tenderness that stops his saying more and keeps him wholly silent. There is no misunderstanding all that she means by this kiss. He understands now as no speech of hers could make him, all that she intends to convey to him by this silent action. Never again does he allude to that blot upon him. She knows all: she has known for a long time, and knowing all, she has come to him and given herself to him. And there is the perfect understanding between them of a deep, holy love.

"I could not believe it," Gabrielle says presently "when Lord Lithmore came and told me that the doctors had pronounced your case hopeless. And I cannot believe it, darling. I will not believe it. Doctors are not omniscient. They may be all wrong. God is good, only believe that."

These words of Gabrielle's do Harold more good than anything. She will not believe that he has been smitten down and will never rise again. It is strange

pleasant to him, this disbelief of hers in the doctors' verdict.

"Did Lord Lithmore tell you?"

"He came on purpose to tell me, or I could not now have been here."

Harold fervently blesses him.

"Oh, Harold, to think that I begged you to do it! I have brought you to this," and she buries her face in the bed-clothes. "I have brought you to a life in death."

"No," Harold says firmly, "do not say that. I did hesitate for a moment. I know I did find it dreadfully hard to go back to death after holding you in my arms. That was what made it so hard. I did hesitate then. I never knew how much I cared for you till I had you in my arms, and in those moments I believed you cared for me. Then you appealed to me to save him, and then the thought came to me with an agony of bitterness, that you cared for him, and that was why you entreated me to save him so earnestly. All the reports I had heard long ago rushed back to me then, and made me feel that it was true that he cared for you and that you cared for him. Oh, darling, don't blame me, don't despise me. All bitterness against him on my own account was forgotten; it only became hard on your account; the thought of you alone made it hard. Was I to give him all—rather, was he to have all? and now was I to save him for you? But for that thought of you then I don't think I could have done it. I know you will be grieved at my saying it, but it is the simple truth. I saved him for your sake, believing

you cared for him, and I would not have you endure one moment's pain that I could spare you. My own suffering was as nothing beside the thought of your suffering. If you cared for him, then the man whom you did not care for would save him for you. In risking my life for him I forgave him all the unknown wrong he had done to me. I did hesitate for a moment, but it was no feeling of bitterness toward him that made me hesitate. It seems to me now inconceivable how I could have hesitated even for that moment."

"Ah, do you really say that, knowing all now?"

"I say, knowing all, that I have prayed again and again for forgiveness for that moment of hesitation."

"My hero!" is all that Gabrielle can murmur. As she sees all the full nobility of that action, she is filled with wonderment. She knew he was noble and daring, but she feels she never knew the full extent till that moment.

After this Harold never again alludes to his injury in any way, and if it is ever mentioned by anyone, he makes as light of it as he can; and in Gabrielle's presence he even tries to make a joke about it. But Gabrielle seldom misunderstands anyone; Harold's generous, thoughtful nature she never misunderstands.

"Gabrielle," he says presently, "I think your prayers for me were not in vain that night. Oh, my friend, all through my misery, all through my bitterness, I have felt those prayers go up for me. You can never guess all the good you have done me. Would, could I would to God I was worthier of you. Even now

cannot understand your love for me. Gabrielle," he says solemnly, "I think he cares for you"—he hesitates a little—"I mean my brother. He is a noble fellow, Gabrielle, if you only knew him as I know him. He is so true, so generous!"

"I am sure of it," Gabrielle answers softly. "He came to me. He told me all about you, how hopeless the doctors thought your case. He was ready to plead with me to go to you if there had been any need for that. I know all his great unselfishness. If you know it in one way, I know it in another."

"He does care for you, then?" Harold says quickly.

Gabrielle bows her head on her hands and remains silent. And Harold reads the answer to his question.

"And could you not care for him?"

Gabrielle raises her head and looks at Harold. There is a world of deep, unutterable feeling in those dark, sad eyes raised to him.

"But if I were dead, darling, then perhaps you might care for him." Harold says this with the simple directness of a child.

"I swear before God," Gabrielle answers, in a low voice of intense earnestness, "that if at this moment you lay before me for ever still, my hand could never touch the hand of any man as it has touched yours." She pauses with a sob that frightens Harold, for he has never in his life seen her otherwise than calm and self-contained.

"Gabrielle," he says, getting as near to her as he can, "what is it? Have I hurt you in some stupid way? I am a great, rough fool, I know. Forgive me, darling."

"Oh, Harold, I cannot bear it."

"What, dear? What is troubling you?"

"The thought that you may never be better. Oh, do not doubt my love. Do not think it possible that I could ever care for anyone else, I have cared for you for so long." And then they seem to change places. He comforts her. He speaks words of soft soothing to her. He forgets all he has suffered, all that lies before him. He thinks only of her suffering on his account. He understands that sob now, and all her love for him—all her sensitive apprehensiveness for him—and in this moment of supreme joy he tells himself he would not change places with his brother or with any other man. Has he not got her love? And he knows what her love means, the one, true, great love of her lifetime, unchangeable and tender always.

So long as Gabrielle had known Harold was well and moving about, in his great strength, she was content to think of him, to love him, and to pray for him; but when she knew him stricken down, and lying alone in a hospital among strangers, then her woman's heart rose in her; the yearning pressed upon her to go to him, to comfort him, to keep her promise to her mother, to be true friend—aye, true wife to him, if he would let her. From Lord Lithmore she had gone straight to her brother Ingram. She had said, after telling him all, "I must go to Harold."

They had been brought up as children together, and Ingram thought it quite natural. He knew Gabrielle's power of comforting and soothing, and he was only glad she should give comfort where she

could. Then he had taken her. He understood all the strangeness of the case. He read Gabrielle better than she read herself, he thought, but he was not prepared, when he entered Harold's small room some time after, to see her on her knees beside the bed. Then he guessed all, and as he looked at Harold's face of intense suffering he was not surprised. But he felt more puzzled than he had ever felt in his life. Could she give her life in this self-sacrificing way, he asked himself. Would it be right to let her tie her life to Harold's death in life? And Harold reads some such thought in his face, for there is a new depth of anguish in his eyes as his hand touches Gabrielle's when she leaves him that night.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE next morning Gabrielle receives this letter from Harold, written faintly with pencil:—

“ My dear Miss Amethyst,—I am going to beg you not to let me see you again till I know positively whether there is any hope for me or not. Lord Lithmore has asked me to have another consultation and I have consented. Not that I have any hope myself, but he has asked me in a way that it is impossible to refuse. He has already written to three eminent physicians about me, and the consultation is to take place two days hence. The doctors here have consented to my being moved to-morrow, and I hope then I shall be once more in my old quarters. And if their verdict should confirm the verdict of these doctors, that there is no hope for me, or even if they should pronounce my ultimate recovery doubtful—then I think it would be better for us both if we did not meet again. I know I am writing in a blundering, stupid way, but I think you will understand me, and still always think of me and pray for me as,

“ Your friend,

“ HAROLD ARGENT.”

This letter gives Gabrielle a little shock; then she sees through it, smiles at it, and says softly, “ Harold you cannot deceive me now, you cannot move me

Oh, darling, what it has cost you to write this letter! Poor fellow, I must see you at once, before that consultation. You must feel through all that time of uncertainty that my love is immovable, come what may."

Gabrielle goes to Ingram and tells him all. She opens her heart to him as she rarely does to anyone. But again that same expression of doubt crosses his face as on the preceding night. "Are you quite sure that Harold is not right," he urges, almost timidly, "and that for the present, till after the consultation, it would not be wiser for you not to meet?"

"What difference can it make?" There is the ring of sharp disappointment in Gabrielle's voice. "It can make no difference to me—the result of that consultation—in my intention to devote to him the rest of my life, whether it be for a month or for every year of my life," and Gabrielle ends with a sob.

Ingram is silent for a moment. He thinks of Valarie, and then he says gently: "No, it should make no difference, and if there should be no hope for him, as the doctors have already said—?"

"Then I give without hesitation all I can give, freely, gladly," and there is no tremor in Gabrielle's voice now.

"He saved your life."

"Oh no, no, that has nothing to do with it. Even if he had not saved my life, I should do the same—just what I am doing. I would give my life to him."

Ingram looks at Gabrielle, and he understands her then as he never has before in his life. He asks no question, for there is no need; he reads in those

words that she has cared for Harold with all the depth of her true woman's heart long before the fire.

"Ingram, take me to him now. Let me answer that letter by going to him," and there is a pathetic pleading in Gabrielle's eyes.

Ingram has grown strangely tender lately, for in his heart, which has been tried in the fire of affliction and has had some of its earthly dross purged away, the work of purification has begun. Ingram feels all the time, though, as if he were helping his sister to sacrifice herself. For he does not deceive himself with any hope. He believes firmly in the opinion of all the doctors, that Harold can never recover perfectly.

"Gabrielle, I know it is hardly necessary to say this to you, but you have not thought of our father. He will be here to-morrow. Would you not rather wait and see him first?"

"Yes, dear, I have thought of our father, and I could not do what I am doing if I did not know him, and feel sure of him."

"You ought to know our father, certainly. How will he ever bear to be separated from you?"

"Separated from me! Do you suppose for a moment I contemplate such a thing as being separated from my father, to whom I owe a first duty and a first love? No, Ingram, I could never leave my father. I feel so sure of his help in what I am doing; and I feel so sure of Harold's sympathy. Have I not seen his love and devotion to his mother for years? Do I not know, as no one knows, the tenderness of his heart, the wonderful thoughtfulness that characterizes all his actions?"

Harold starts from his drowsy state as Gabrielle enters the room. There is no mistaking the long-drawn breath of deep joy as Harold looks up at her. "Ah, I knew you would come," he says, with a stilled satisfaction in his voice.

"Then why did you write me that hypocritical letter?" smiles Gabrielle; "why did you give yourself the pain of writing it when you never doubted me?"

"No, I never doubted you, but, Gabrielle, I did save your life, and—and—I cannot bear anyone to think that I would accept any sacrifice from you. It is a sacrifice of life, Gabrielle. I never thought of it till you had gone. I could not think of it then, when you were here. I could only think of you, of the joy of having you with me. The very wonderment of your love for me obliterated every other thought. But now I see it all so differently. I can only see the fearful sacrifice of your life. It cannot be right for me ever to accept so much from you—a life of self-abnegation. Oh, Gabrielle, help me!" and he looks at her with the trustful appeal of a child, which thrills her as nothing else could. She knows so well all the strength of his character, all the daring in his nature, that this touch of gentle confiding pierces to the very depths of her deep love.

"Yes, dear," she says firmly, but touching his hair as she speaks, with her soft, cool fingers, "I will help you. I have come to help you. But so long as you look at it in the light of a sacrifice, then I can do nothing. For you are right—on your part it would not be right to let me sacrifice my life for you. But do

you not know that, even if you had not saved my life, I would do just what I am doing? I would have come to you then with the same love which I now bring you," and kneeling beside the bed, she continues: "Harold, I was always longing to hear about you. I was always longing to hear that you needed me. I longed for a time when I might tell you of my love, for I knew you would never mention your love for me. I knew your pride."

"No, it was not pride. How could I speak of love to you? What right had I to breathe the word love to you?"

"The right of love," Gabrielle whispers, "the right of the truest, purest love that ever was. Your mother told me, when she was dying, of your love for me, but that you would never tell me of it; and I knew you never would."

"No, I never could. But the night I saved you, I showed you then that I cared for you. I could not help it. I thought we might die together then, and I did want you to know how much you were to me when I held you in my arms! And now I never could save you, however great the danger you might be in!" and there is a ring of desperation in his tone.

"I would not have you save my life again to refuse my love," Gabrielle answers, not without some bitterness. "Oh, Harold, you do not know the half of my love yet. You can never know how I have yearned for the moment when I might tell you that my heart was yours. I have longed for the moment when the power to speak of my love for you might be given to

me, and now I will not be silent. I will confess it all to you. I will do more, I will even plead for your love."

"Hush, Gabrielle, you know you have not to plead for my love. You know you have had it all for years. You know *why* I was silent. And have you really longed for the time when you might tell me of it? Oh, my darling!"

"Harold, nothing—no one—could persuade me now to leave you. No, no words of yours even can move me now."

"Gabrielle," he tremulously responds, "I wonder whether it is often so—whether out of the bitterest suffering the truest, fullest joy is born. I could not know a fuller joy than I know at this moment—a joy which seems to swallow up all fear—fear of future pain—fear of death. If I were told at this moment that I had to meet death, I know I could meet it now without any fear, without any bitterness but that of being separated from you for a time."

"Yes, it would only be for a time; you are right, only for a time we should be separated. But I want you to believe that no other love like this could ever fill my heart for any man. It is not only for this life and in this life that my love is yours, but in that life after death I am yours. Always remember, that if you are not to get better—if it be the Father's will to try my heart in the hottest fire into which it can be cast—remember, that even in that fire of grief I am yours—yours forever—by the true love which God shall renew day by day."

"I will never forget," he says simply. "Whenever death comes, with God's help, and strengthened by the thought of our love, I will meet it as you would have me."

"I know it," she murmurs, with a thrill of holy enthusiasm in her voice.

"And will you believe your love has helped and strengthened me in a way you do not dream? Through your love I have seen the Father and felt His love."

Gabrielle's only response is a low sob of mixed joy and pain. He puts his hand softly on her head, and it is he who comforts her, not she who comforts him.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"I WANT you to do something for me, Miss Amethyst." Lord Lithmore speaks calmly, but there is a nervous hesitancy in his voice which makes Gabrielle look at him earnestly. She notices that he is looking ill, very worn and anxious. Her heart aches for him. It is out of her power, she thinks sadly, to offer him any word of comfort. The very love he has given her prevents her from expressing the true sympathy that she cannot help giving him, and her appreciation of his whole bearing lately towards his brother. That she should have added in any way to his burden of pain is a great grief to her. Her sympathy for pain is too deep and strong for her to become oblivious for a moment, even, of another's suffering, especially if she has in any way caused it.

It is the day previous to the consultation that this conversation takes place. Lord Lithmore has called and asked to see Miss Amethyst for a few minutes. "I could not have dared to ask you before," he says, "but I want you to be on my side in this cause." He is speaking earnestly now. "I know if you are on my side I have nothing to fear," he smiles, and there is much sadness in his smile. It tells her that his wound is still very deep and raw.

"I want Harold," he goes on rapidly, without looking at Gabrielle, "to accept what is his right, what in all justice is his due. God knows, if I could only

change places with him I would willingly," and then he flushes, for he has not thought of all that change would mean when he uttered the speech,—thinking only of Harold's good. He feels almost guilty now as he looks at her, and a great longing rushes over him. If Gabrielle has noticed his sudden pause and confusion, she takes no notice of it, and Lord Lithmore continues a little excitedly: "I want you to get my brother"—and his voice softens as he says 'my brother'—"who has been grievously wronged, to consent to my doing what is in my power to set that wrong right. There is no use in my not speaking boldly. My brother has been cruelly wronged—a wrong which in this life can never be wholly righted. But it has become the dearest wish of my life now to undo some of this great wrong, which was quite unknown to me till the other day. I would it were in my power to give him his rightful place and then go away where no one could know me." There is a ring of gloomy despair in his tone that cuts Gabrielle to the heart.

"I cannot promise you all you ask, I fear. I don't know whether it would be fair to you, or whether what you suggest is possible. But I cannot fail to see great generosity in what you propose."

"Oh, no!" he answers deprecatingly, "don't put it in that way—justice is justice, there can be no generosity in doing bare justice. I am only doing what *should be*. You won't be on my side, then, even in this matter of plain justice?"

That one word *even* is spoken with soft pleading. Gabrielle is silent, but that look of sympathetic pain

creeps into her eyes which long ago burnt into his memory.

"I am not surprised at what you wish, because it is just like you. I know it is just the thing you would do. But I do think it nobly generous all the same."

A flush of keen gratification passes over his face. This word of praise coming from her is sweet to him. "I wish you would not call it generous. If you would only say that you think it quite natural, that would comfort and help me."

"But I cannot say that with truth. I think, indeed—I know you are not—conscious of the extent of that generosity. You are unable to understand it, because you are so single-hearted in this earnest desire of yours."

He dares not thank her in words, but he could not hide the look that came into his face and lighted it with sudden pleasure.

"It is an earnest desire of mine, to make Harold as happy as I can. Could it be otherwise?" he pleads. "Think of all he has suffered. Why, *you* must know it as no one knows it. Think of all he has borne! Think of all he is now suffering for me! It is to me the strangest thing, that of all people in this world, it should have been my brother Harold who risked his life for me; who saved me, and who now is to suffer all his life for that act of noble daring; who has perhaps given his life for the brother who must have cost him so much bitterness of feeling! Oh, when I think of all he has borne I could almost wish he had left me to die, and not added this additional weight of obligation to my debt! You know how great it is."

"I know it," she answers sadly. At this moment she is feeling with him all his pain, for there is intense weariness in his voice as he appeals to her. As she sits there looking out of the window, the feeling that *she* should have caused him pain—although through no fault of hers—is bitter to her. The look of wistful suffering deepens on her face till Lord Lithmore can bear it no more. He is bending over her as he speaks with a vehement earnestness. "You are very unhappy about something—about Harold; but don't look so hopeless. He will recover. I do believe he will, in spite of what these doctors have said. I still hope. I shall never give up hope."

"I was not thinking of Harold then, I was thinking of you," answers Gabrielle gently, raising her eyes to his anxious face.

"Thank you," is all he can trust himself to say; but there is questioning surprise in his voice.

"Forgive me if I have ever hurt you. Forgive me if, without meaning it, I even now give you pain. I know you as you are, and the thought—" she pauses, then she goes on more softly, "the thought that you should not be happy is a true grief to me. I am saying nothing to you that Harold would not like me to say. Believe me, he, too, would now do anything for you."

"I can scarcely imagine *his* having any other feeling than that of hatred for me."

"Ah, no, it is not so, not now. Why, he asked me on Wednesday, if he were dead, if then, then—"

"Don't!" cries Lord Lithmore, hastily moving

away, "you must not make yourself say another word. My God! This is more than I can bear! Was ever human forgiveness more holy, more perfect? Oh, why must the sins of the fathers be visited upon the children? Oh, my brother!" Then, turning, he stands for a moment before Gabrielle while he utters these words solemnly: "Will you tell him from me, some day, that I thank God it was given to him to possess what I once thought would be dearest of all to me in this life?"

"Raymond," she speaks his name softly, a sudden smile flashing through her tears, "do you know what Harold always sighed for when he was a boy? *Not* a wife, but a brother. He ought—we ought—to be doubly happy in finding you now. You see we can neither of us do without you—especially Harold. He will need you more even than poor, weak me."

Lord Lithmore shakes his head. "But," he pleads with an effort, "do for me what I want more than anything on earth. Be on my side now, and help me to feel I have made some reparation to my brother, my only brother." He says this as proudly as Mrs. Argent used to say "my first grandson." "Give me the only happiness I can know now."

"I promise to be on your side," she answers softly. Not even Harold could have lifted her hand to his lips with deeper reverence, and then, without another word, he leaves her.

And when Harold knew all, what could he do in the generosity of his great soul but write to his brother?

"Raymond, my brother.—While I have been hating you with an unjust, rancorous hate, you have drawn very near and touched with a finger of love my wound.

"You, and you alone, had the power to touch that wound and staunch its flow of bitterness. You have made me feel a lofty nobility that can lift us up above this world's cruel decrees.

"You have made me see that a man must take his life, not as given by even the best of fathers, but as a gift, good and joyous, direct from God.

"Gabrielle says she told you I always wanted a brother. God has given me one—with a brother's heart. Your offer is like the rest of you. I can stand out no longer against this pull of brotherhood in my blood, so come when you will.

"HAROLD."

CHAPTER XXXII.

"Come to me, Gabrielle!"

Only four words, but full of grave importance to Gabrielle, for it is the morning after the consultation that she receives these words of loving command. She starts with a brave heart, but when she stands before that door all is so silent and deathlike that her heart fails her. She is trembling violently now. She cannot even turn the handle of the door. Someone opens the door for her, then leads her gently to the bed. "God bless you both," he murmurs, as he leaves her kneeling there, and goes out of the room.

"Look up, darling, there is hope—hope—far away, they say, but still precious hope for me. O, Gabrielle, I could think only of how *you* would feel, my darling, if you had to learn that there was no hope. But God is good. When I think of all He has given me in you then I know and feel His goodness in every part of me."

"And you will soon be able to get up and walk?"

"Not soon," he answers, smiling into her troubled face, "not soon. Now, you are unreasonable. My dearest, what is that to me when I have you? I have hope and I have you. I will not think of more. I will go no further. Has He not said, 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be'? Do not be afraid of me. I think I can be very patient now." There is a gentle calm in his voice that reassures Gabrielle as nothing

else could—for there is not a shadow of bitterness in it. 'Do not be afraid for me, Gabrielle. It has been a long struggle. I have not been through one fire only, but through a spiritual fire also, that, I trust, has burned out much dross. Now I can say with you that I am 'beginning to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.' "

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